


LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
V58c
v. 2



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

THE
CHILD OF THE DESERT

BY

COL. THE HON. C. S. VEREKER

LIEUT.-COL. COMMANDANT, LIMERICK CITY ARTILLERY MILITIA

F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF "SCENES IN THE SUNNY SOUTH," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.

LONDON
CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193, PICCADILLY
1878

[All rights reserved]

LONDON:
PRINTED BY VIRTUE AND CO., LIMITED,
CITY ROAD.

823
V58c
v. 2

CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
CLEVER TACTICS	I

CHAPTER II.

THE MARQUIS DE ST. BERTRAND	17
---------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

WITNESSES	40
---------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

UP AT BOU-ZAREAH	60
----------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

AN AMERICAN FRIEND.	76
-----------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

AZZAHRA'S RESOLVE	88
-----------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

	PAGE
ON BOARD THE ATLANTA	95

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE WAY TO CHENOUA	105
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IX.

AN EVENING AT THE VILLA	127
-----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER X.

TRACKED AGAIN	148
-------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI.

SCENES BY THE WAY	161
-----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII.

AT SEA	180
------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GALE	222
--------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

ESCAPE	231
------------------	-----

CHAPTER XV.

ALL BUT RECAPTURED	243
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

PAGE

WRECK OF THE YACHT	253
------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

HOME OF THE KAÏD	264
----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

TREACHERY	275
---------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BATHS OF HAMMAM R'RIRA	287
--------------------------------------	-----

THE CHILD OF THE DESERT.

CHAPTER I.

CLEVER TACTICS.

THE remembrance of Olinda's conduct with Edwardes during the excursion to Rusgunia continued to give great pain to Alice Thornton, Geraldine, and Frederick. They continued to bewail the marked assiduity with which she had courted Edwardes's society throughout the day, and the studied neglect with which she had treated Henry—her lover, as they believed. With Wilton they sympathized warmly, on account of the mortification he had evidently suffered; and they determined to remonstrate with Olinda, so as to prevent the recurrence of such unwise behaviour.

In planning this attack Alice Thornton was the moving spirit. The silly woman, and the young boy and girl whom she was weak enough to take into her confidence, possessed not suffi-

cient discernment to comprehend how matters stood in reality. Taking a narrow superficial view, they chose to form as the basis and groundwork of their absurd deliberations this erroneous assumption—that Olinda and Wilton were lovers destined for each other, whom it only required time to develop into full-blown worshippers of Hymen.

From such a point of view what Olinda had done naturally appeared inexcusable. Henry's pitiable dejection they had witnessed, as he sat apart on the deck, pensive and silent, and they unhesitatingly laid the blame at Olinda's door. Had they been aware that his thoughts were far away from Olinda—had they been aware of the real state of her feelings—had they been aware that the unhappy girl simply sought to suppress and conceal deep sorrow by the enforced excitement of conversing with their host, they would have regarded her with pitying compassion rather than with angry resentment. But they knew not what had passed. They knew not of the heartburnings the two had brought upon themselves by their mutual perversity—they knew not of the gulf between. So it came to pass that they blindly stumbled in the dark.

What a pest to society are unsought advisers and troublesome meddlers in the affairs of others! What blunders the thankless busy-bodies commit! What irreparable injuries they

inflict! Taking up some wrong-headed crotchet, they persist in striving to force it on the victim of their mistaken good-nature, who may peradventure be withheld by feelings of delicacy, unsuspected by their shallow brains, from opening his lips to set them right. Thus forced into silence, he may hear the most preposterous statements launched forth, and the most monstrous accusations laid to his charge, without the possibility of explaining or defending his conduct.

For instance, the dying duellist, gasping out to his second, as the lifeblood feebly gurgled forth, "It was all a mistake, but I could not explain without compromising a woman!" All honour to his memory! But did this woman appreciate at its true worth the martyr's noble self-sacrifice to save the honour of her name? Did she shed grateful tears of sorrow over the grave of this gallant gentleman, this *preux chevalier*? Well, let us hope so! If she loved, yes; if not Well, let us draw a veil.

Women there have been to talk and laugh and carouse, and lay themselves out afresh for admiration and flattery, while the brave hero was lying dead for them, scarcely yet cold, and his lifeblood scarcely stanchd.

The flagrant mistake of all prying interferers they were committing at the Villa Isly. They

were intermeddling in things they understood not. They were bestowing compassion on Henry by reason of Olinda's supposed slights, when he merited no compassion; and they were withholding compassion from her, who truly deserved sympathy far more than the censure they were senselessly heaping on her head.

They were ready to condemn, and they wished to convey their reproof; but they shrank from approaching Olinda on this delicate errand, for, notwithstanding the gentleness and amiability of her temperament, she awed them by her calm tacit dignity. Frederick, however, possessed plenty of spirit, and he volunteered to "go in at Olinda," as he expressed himself, although not without considerable hesitation, for he entertained a lively remembrance of how she had taken him to task on sundry previous occasions.

As he stepped on to the verandah through the open French casement-doors, to join Olinda where she sat reading on a rustic-work seat, he perceived Wilton coming across the pleasure-grounds.

To Frederick his cousin's opportune advent was a most welcome godsend, for Olinda, in her quiet way, generally contrived to keep the young gentleman in good behaviour, so that he felt overjoyed at another coming to relieve him of his invidious task.

Changing his direction, he joined Henry, leading him indoors to his aunt and cousins, who bitterly vituperated Olinda for slighting him and encouraging Edwardes.

As regarded Olinda, whose noble nature should have precluded the possibility of disparaging remarks, such unmerited abuse was simply preposterous; and they were equally guilty of bad taste towards Wilton, of whose true sentiments they were totally ignorant. Had he in reality loved Olinda, as he himself so lately believed, and as they still persisted in supposing, such expressions of compassion and sympathy, however well-intentioned, must have given profound mortification to one with his proud sensitive spirit. But stupid *gaucheries* and *grossièretés* like this Alice Thornton was for ever perpetrating in her helpless imbecility.

By good fortune no pain was inflicted through their folly, for Henry entered warmly into their plan for warning Olinda. For several days past he had proposed advising her, and had, in fact, come for the purpose not on his own account, but on hers, because her exaggerated genius-worship was fast becoming a grievous misfortune.

Olinda saw him approach, and instinctively divined his mission.

Some time had elapsed since their last meeting, and she rightly assumed that this prolonged absence had arisen through her having offended

him, a conviction confirmed by the anxious look he wore. She doubted not his purpose was to take her to task, to offer advice, and to administer reproof.

This project she determined to defeat. On the impulse of the moment she planned to be beforehand with him, to outmanœuvre him, and to turn the tables on him, so as completely to foil his designs. She determined to attack first—to act on the offensive instead of on the defensive—to carry the war into the enemy's country.

This system of tactics formed a complete surprise. Henry had come prepared to constitute himself her confessor and mentor, and here she was anticipating all he meant to say, without betraying a particle of contrition for her sins of omission or commission. Thus were his visions of tearful penitence, and of the expressed sorrow he hoped to draw from her softened heart, rudely scattered to the winds. Even her keeping aloof from himself on the Atlanta and her lengthened conversations with their entertainer she sought to palliate and justify.

As she proceeded she amazed him at the altered complexion she made the events of that day to wear by the magic of her words. Almost she persuaded him that she was the victim instead of the transgressor.

“Where have you been all this time, Henry?”

she commenced in a playful unconcerned tone, as he seated himself beside her. "It is such an age since you favoured us with your presence, I was beginning to imagine you were jealous and cross at my letting our host monopolize me the day of the water-party to Rusgunia. Fancy my vanity! But you could not be so absurdly silly, Henry? Besides, what did it matter to you what I said or did? You could not have missed my company, you were so wrapt up the whole day in contemplation of your adored incognita, brooding alone in the yacht's bows, like Achilles sulking at his ships after his lost Briseïs. Own now, would it not have been heartless, nay cruel, to interrupt the sentimental current of your thoughts?—to intrude remarks about the dull daily routine of life into your dreams of love and romance?"

She paused to see the effect of this feeler, which fully realised her anticipations, as shown by her cousin's mute astonishment.

The bold strategic movement did thoroughly baffle him, for it placed him under the disadvantage of having to offer explanations, instead of demanding them. Here was this girl, who had checkmated him by a few simple sentences—had put him in a dilemma from which he knew not how to extricate himself; for, were he to acknowledge the correctness of her surmise that she had caused him annoyance, her manner told

him she would receive the confession in a spirit of badinage more galling than open hostility. Still more would she rail at any accusation of levity in manner towards Edwardes, which she would of a certainty ascribe to jealousy.

On the other hand, did he deny, in reply to her questions, that her behaviour had displeased him, the entire fabric he had reared up would totter to the ground—all reason for remonstrance would be destroyed.

The charge of jealousy, with which she tauntingly taxed him, he could repel, and without fear either of offending her, after her refusal to accept him. Still at times he suspected, when he came to analyze, that some little amount of jealousy as well as of soreness did exist. It was hard to be so completely ignored, and apparently forgotten, by one on whom but the other day he believed his affections to be unalterably fixed. He suspected his vexation was not altogether due to solicitude on his cousin's behalf, and that it contained a dash of the selfish element. He suspected that even his passion for Azzahra did not preclude a faint glimmer of the old tender feeling from appearing once more.

Old ties have such a powerful spell ; they are so hard to break loose from, strive how one may !

He felt drawn towards Olinda still, he knew

not how nor why. He thought she might have treated him more tenderly, in memory of the past; might have pitied him and consoled him, not have deserted him when she saw him borne down by grief.

So he temporised, following a middle course, and halting between two opinions. He would not betray that he felt pained or aggrieved, neither would he abstain altogether from alluding to her imprudence, mock as she might.

Wherefore his answer was evasive. He assured her that against herself he entertained not the slightest pique, that he had no desire to broach the painful subject she had introduced, and that her conduct had in no degree biassed his feelings.

These assertions were distinctly untrue. He had come with such intention; he did feel pique against her; and his private feelings were strongly biassed and influenced by what she had done. Under other circumstances he would have shrunk from descending to such a subterfuge, but he was angry at the way in which she had routed and discomfited him, and he determined, if he could, to rob her of her advantage.

Believing that she was trying to mislead and deceive him, by the altered complexion she put on all that had occurred, he felt justified in employing the same weapons against her.

Besides, it was strictly true that she had

begun the discussion, and this gave him the advantage he sought. She opened the door, so he stepped in to take possession.

Avowedly, then, for her good, and for hers alone, he gently broke to her how her heedless indiscretion had been commented on, and what pain it had produced among her friends. But especially he dwelt on the fact that the conversation on the unpleasant matter they were discussing originated wholly and solely with her, and that thereby alone the disparaging remarks he was making were drawn forth.

This he considered his great trumping-card for proving to demonstration that he came with no premeditation to call her to account and lecture her for her misdeeds.

"Oh! Henry, you speak not with your wonted frankness," she calmly replied, a kind gentle smile lighting her soft features as she ignored his reproofs and still preserved the lead. "You assert that I have introduced this subject. Well, strictly speaking, you adhere to the truth. But were not you on the point of commencing it yourself? Was not your visit here to-day paid expressly for the purpose? Again, you tell me your regret at what happened was solely on my account. Now, I ask you, is that the case? Were you not chagrined—bitterly chagrined—on your own account? You know you were. Had I spoken to you on board the yacht as well

as to Mr. Edwardes, impartially dividing my attention, you would have been the first to think well of me for showing polite consideration towards our host while partaking of his hospitality. In fact, it was my neglect of you, not my attempts to return his kindness by conversing with him on his favourite topics, that constituted my fault in your eyes. Come now, confess the error of your ways. Confess that you were just a little bit jealous. I know very well you were. I meant you to be jealous. Indeed, I should have been immensely disappointed had you not been jealous. You were jealous that I was not as unhappy as yourself, that I was in such apparently high spirits, and that I did not sympathize with you in your miseries about your pretty heathen—that when you mourned I did not lament; is not that the case? You will not answer, but I must insist on your pleading guilty, for guilty you undoubtedly are, and you know it;” and she gave him one of the sweet bewitching smiles which of old had ever won his love.

This was where her power lay. But in the absence of vanity about her personal appearance, as contradistinguished from vanity about her genius, which so strongly marked and individualised her character, she was unaware that she possessed this master-key for unlocking the hearts of men.

"I suppose I must plead guilty, then," he good-humouredly responded, unable to restrain a smile at the successful audacity and adroitness with which she had entrapped him, in spite of himself, into owning thus his weakness. "I cannot deny that when you so pointedly neglected me for another, a slight feeling of——"

"That is sufficient," she interrupted in a kindly tone; "I want not to humble you by hearing more."

Of course she did not. She had completely outflanked him. He had sought her to remonstrate and advise—to point out the heedless folly of her ways. But, behold! she had made it appear that he was the one whose conduct merited reproof—that it was his wailing and mourning in solitude that had driven her away and forced her to act as she had done.

"Well, now that you have made a clear confession to me," she softly whispered, casting her eyes upon the ground, "I must do the same by you, for any approach to deception I abhor. I must tell you then, frankly, that I feel very sorry indeed for acting as I did on the Atlanta. But I was forced into it, Henry. You were so abstracted—so absorbed in daydreams about this pagan you think you love—that you would not mix with any of us; and I wanted to show my independence, and prove that my feelings were not wounded. Sooner than let you discover

my mortification at being supplanted, I feigned contentment which I was very far from feeling. Now we understand each other," she added. "How much wiser to have had this explanation and mutual forgiveness than to continue alienated and distrustful!"

"Will you promise then, Olinda," he pleaded, as a last hope of gaining a little advantage, "that you will not continue to mix on familiar terms with comparative strangers, and attract such unfortunate notoriety, merely because they are clever and learned?"

"Most certainly I shall give no such promise," she firmly answered, looking highly displeased. "When I am fortunate enough to meet a man whose ideas coincide with mine, why should we debar ourselves from the pleasure of interchanging our thoughts? Do not expect such a sacrifice, Henry. You have no right to demand it, neither has any one else. Well you know my disposition. Well you know I only care for the society of men as a means of improving my mind. You know I mingle not with them from frivolity, like too many, alas! of my sex. Then spare me further pain, I beseech you. Depend on it, your remonstrances will produce no such result as you anticipate, for never shall I cease to seek for conversation that pleases as well as elevates."

His transparent attempt to obtain the mastery had made her angry, after the candid way in which she had humbled herself before him, and almost confessed that she had wished for his attentions. She saw through his policy and resented it deeply.

But he could not follow these little intricacies of the female mind—especially at the present, when his thoughts were otherwise engrossed.

Olinda saw she had hurt his feelings by her ebullition of pride, and she put out her hand with warmth.

“Pardon me, Henry,” she said gently; “I was foolish for not receiving in good part what you said, and what I know you meant for my good. You forgave me for tendering my advice at the Jardin d’Essai, though the way I spoke of your Arab must have wounded you sorely, and I should have had equal forbearance with you.”

Thus by gentle persuasiveness she won the day, and conquered him well at all points. This soothing womanly appeal for pardon—this humility of hers—had completely softened and subdued him when he thought he was surest of victory.

When Wilton left Olinda, Miss Thornton was in waiting to intercept him and learn the result of his interview.

“Beaten all along the line,” he exclaimed, in a tone of assumed gaiety that ill accorded with

the mortification he felt and showed. "She carried the war into the enemy's country, and commenced her attack in the most skilful style of strategy. I felt outgeneralled and covered with confusion, like the trembling inhabitants of Rome when Hannibal, pursuing the same system of warfare, left Carthage to her fate and, crossing the Alps into the plains of Italy, carried fire and sword to the very gates of the Eternal City."

Great disappointment prevailed at the failure of Wilton's mission, and the conclave began to devise fresh schemes for breaking Olinda off her unfortunate foible, though now the attempt seemed hopeless.

"Our only chance lies with you, aunt," Henry said, addressing Miss Thornton. "You must take Edwardes in hand yourself, and exert your irresistible fascinations to lure him away from Olinda."

In reply Miss Thornton made a playful pretence of boxing her nephew's ear for such want of proper respect.

"What fun that will be!" exclaimed Geraldine, clapping her hands in delight at the prospect of Olinda's vexation at the interference, and at the absurd devices her aunt would be sure to employ. "Frederick, will not you assist Aunt Alice?"

"Of course I will," he replied. "Were

my sister to make a fool of herself by marrying a fellow like that, I should cut her off with a shilling, for all the great opinion she has of herself."

"For shame! to speak of your relations with such disrespect!" Geraldine remonstrated.

"I don't believe in relations that look down on one, and only care to talk civilly when they want to turn one to account," he doggedly observed.

Wilton could not help endorsing in secret a good deal of what the young gentleman uttered, for such had been his experience of Olinda. Although lavish of giving advice, she had often treated him with great heartlessness on many occasions. But he held his peace. He knew that through ignorance she did it—ignorance of the world and its ways.

For a moment his thoughts were directed to Olinda's faults. Speedily the recollection of them fled, and he only thought kindly of her, as he used to think. Yet did her want of prudence and her refusal to listen to the voice of reason distress him much, so that he trembled for the future.

Alas! soon were his worst fears and anticipations to be realised. The destroyer was nigh, at the very door, though he knew it not.

CHAPTER II.

THE MARQUIS DE ST. BERTRAND.

RAOUL ST. BERTRAND believed that woman's mission was to fall down at his feet and worship; that he had but to come, to be seen, and to conquer. Like too many of his foreign brothers in arms, when not absorbed in gaming, in nipping cognac, vermuth, and absinthe at cafés, and in the grosser sorts of dissipation, his leisure moments were devoted to the massacre of female hearts, and to boasting before his comrades afterwards of his triumphant achievements. Handsome, clever, and fascinating, he failed to comprehend how any could resist his seductive arts, and became lost in wondering amazement when such an unwonted phenomenon occurred.

Long he had gazed with the hungry eye of desire on the beauty and the graceful æsthetic form of Olinda. He loved her with fierce unbridled passion, and vowed she should be his. Should her fortune prove large—and were not the English all rich?—he would make her his

wife. If not, *parbleu!* she should be his all the same.

This resolve formed, he struck the table at which he sat an impressive blow of decision, while a darkling cloud overshadowed his firm well-chiselled features, proving that no effort would be spared, no opportunity would be lost, for carrying his project into effect.

“Mine she shall be,” he exclaimed, springing to his feet after long remaining seated in silent contemplation, “if she can be won by mortal! No obstacle, no crime, shall stop me now.”

But caution, he knew, would be needed. He knew she would be as wary as a bird beside a snare set by the hand of the fowler, and that the slightest error or want of judgment, arising through over-anxiety, would send the frightened creature flying away in scared alarm.

“It is a question of time,” he mused. “Much time will be required, yet will it be time well spent in the intoxicating delirium of delicious expectation.”

But how commence attacking the fortress? That was the question—that was the difficulty. Happy chances abounded for wooing others of the sex and urging his suit; but this bewitching, blue-eyed, golden-haired *Anglaise* mingled not in society, and but rarely appeared at all in public. Where could he meet her to renew his acquaintance? How could he commence

operations and open the first parallel for his siege?

By one plan only did there seem a chance of success, for he knew how reserved and how *difficiles* are many of the daughters of Albion with comparative strangers. That was to carry the works by a *coup de main*, boldly dashing in and taking possession before time was allowed to organize resistance. As she refused to come forth and give him the opportunity he sought, he would repair to the Villa Isly and make the opportunity for himself. Slight their acquaintance, it was true; still, remembering the helpless confiding way she hung on his words at the Kasbah, remembering also how gratified she looked at meeting him again, though but for a moment, at the Jardin d'Essai, he felt assured he might venture to make the attempt. He felt assured she would at least receive him with courtesy, and perchance would even consider his visit a favour.

As for the cousin, he cared not about the *bête*. Let him do his worst; he feared him not. A duel with the insolent *gamin* who dared to cast at him a look of defiance in the house of Selim Mustapha was just what would please him most. Great the excitement that would prevail in Algiers at an Englishman being shot in a quarrel about a lady, and he would be the hero of the hour. If the fellow chose to get jealous,

and set up his impertinence, he must take the consequences, and every right-minded person would join in declaring that he only got rightly served.

Another happy thought struck him as he pondered, muttering his diabolical projects.

“What if the fellow should refuse to fight?” he mused. “The cowards of English never fight now, and have even passed laws making the practice illegal, just as if the world could possibly go on without such a protection for one’s honour, and such a sure way of punishing insolence and redressing wrongs. Would it not be a glorious triumph were he to meet my challenge by sneaking behind the sheltering laws and social institutions of his country? But though he might tremble to risk his base life and shirk meeting me in the field, the coward could not escape the soundest horsewhipping I was able to inflict, nor the contempt of every brave honourable man in the country !”

How empty were these threats, and how contemptible was this braggadocio, he was to learn hereafter to his cost in the school of experience. He was to discover that Henry Wilton was every inch a man, with a lion’s heart, and a parching consuming thirst for the lifeblood of vengeance.

Following the course he had shaped out, St. Bertrand sought the villa on the Isly Hills at an

hour when he had informed himself that Olinda would be within, and was received by her in a spirit of friendly politeness far exceeding his most sanguine hopes. Guileless and unsuspecting, she took no pains to conceal the gratification she had derived from his society the last time they met, nor her satisfaction at now renewing their friendship. The absence of restraint and reserve, the free easy warmth with which she conversed, the anxiety to drink in his words which she displayed, filled him with astonishment and delight, so that he regarded her already as a sure prey.

“Poor thing! I should regret being forced to do her wrong,” he sighed as he looked amorously into her radiant face, beaming with intellect and purity. “For her sake may her fortune be large, so that I can marry her and act towards her with honour!”

After a time, deeming he had made sufficient progress, he took his leave, for he prudently abstained from alarming the quarry by precipitancy; but he obtained permission to return.

“Pray call whenever you choose,” said Olinda, with her thoughtless but characteristic *naïveté*, for his conversation afforded her infinite pleasure. “I shall always look upon you as the *bienvenu*.”

Thus encouraged, Raoul often sought the villa at Isly, and on each occasion found his chances of success increase.

Daily he feared that Henry Wilton would come to interrupt the *tête-à-tête*, but, to his relief, this annoyance was spared.

St. Bertrand's oft-recurring visits Henry regarded with great displeasure and sorrow, so that he rarely now remained in his cousin's society, or even repaired to the Villa Isly. He could perceive that St. Bertrand, far from being the absorbed devotee of intellectual and artistic refinement that Olinda in her simplicity believed, was a hardened libertine, who merely made use of these false pretences to serve his ambitious and profligate purposes. Such a man he viewed with horror as the constant companion of his pure and guileless relative.

He yearned to warn her of the danger to her fair fame, if not to her honour, which she was incurring; but he remembered with bitter grief that when last he tendered his advice she resented his interference, saying she would not be dictated to, would not be debarred from holding rational and improving conversation (as she chose to express herself) with whomsoever she pleased. He therefore deemed it more prudent to exasperate her no more, to meddle no more where his efforts would be both unwelcome and unavailing. He determined rather to let matters drift on, hoping her inherent good sense would presently come to her rescue, and put an end to this deplorable foolishness.

Olinda and Raoul were now on such intimate terms that one day he determined to sound her with reference to her possessions, a subject so dear to his false heart; for sorely he needed a large amount of capital to clear off old debts, and to feed his insatiable ungovernable appetite for gaming and dissipation. Adroitly he sought to discover whether she had large possessions; and, if so, whether they were at her own disposal, or tied up in the hands of others. Considerable caution was necessary for this purpose, lest suspicion of mercenary motives might be aroused, but he felt equal to the occasion.

Thinking it prudent to begin by craftily working on her tender feelings, and so enlisting her sympathies and pity, he hypocritically bewailed the uncongenial existence to which he was doomed, his enforced severance from all that was refined and intellectual, the bushel under which his talents and accomplishments lay hidden in a desolate corner of the earth like Algeria, and the misfortune of not possessing income sufficient to rightly maintain his title and position in the world. But, before and above all, he deplored the hard fate that had hitherto debarred him from meeting one worthy to take to wife and make the confidant of his bosom—one who, besides possessing personal attractions, was intellectual, domesticated, amiable, and accomplished. Such was the only woman

with whom he could live happily; such was the haven he pined for, such the rest he sought.

“Were I blessed enough to discover a fair being to whom I could surrender my whole heart and soul,” he went on with reptile-like cunning, “to whom I could devote my entire existence, oh! how gladly would I cast away this hollow false excitement, this spurious enjoyment, of which I am now compelled to partake!—how gladly would I retire far away from the hollow deceitful world, to pass the rest of my days in peace and contentment at some fair rural retreat with the dear cherished object of my love!”

Olinda well knew he was treading on the dangerous ground of lovemaking, which she ought not to allow, but she lacked courage to cut short his pleasant soothing strains. Believing, besides, every syllable of his lamentations over the cruel calamities that beset his path, she compassionated his lot, and pined to soothe him in his distress.

“Your unhappiness causes me great pain,” she replied in tones such as the fly might address to the spider when receiving the invitation of his expectant devourer. “It is sad to see a man possessed of your noble qualities reduced to this pitiable condition, but you must learn to be less *exigant* in the selection of her you would marry. You could find abundance from whom to choose.

Numbers, I am sure, would joyfully accept such an agreeable cavalier."

Bowing low, and thanking Olinda for her encomiums and kind wishes, he exclaimed, looking sorrowfully in her eyes :

"Alas! where meet a girl, how fascinating soever may be her exterior, who within is not a prey to overweening conceit and frivolity? Could happiness be mine, think you, with a partner for life like this? Never. What I pine to find is intellect and soul. I pine for sympathy and love—I pine for a happy home!"

"Domestic felicity, I can see," she went on, "is the aim and goal of your existence. But surely it cannot be so hopelessly impossible to discover one such as you desire. Though I grieve to say that young women of the present day are reared up to prefer levity and love of admiration to the more commendable pursuits of home, still there must be exceptions, and many exceptions, to every rule."

"No doubt such is the case," replied St. Bertrand, endeavouring to look grave, "and I own to having seen some I might have selected without risk; but, unluckily, they resembled myself in having good family connections, good manners, and a good heart, though, alas! a very unplethoric purse."

"And would that interfere where you sincerely loved?" she thoughtfully asked. "Surely

rural life requires no excessive expenditure. You can make your outlay what you please, especially with a thrifty conscientious wife to look after your interests and take care that you are not plundered by your dependants."

This homely outburst nearly caused the dashing *roué* to collapse with merriment at the expense of his fair hostess; but good breeding, and the fear of injuring his cause, enabled him to succeed in controlling his countenance.

"That is very true," he continued; "but I have my family connection and my friendships to keep up in Paris, and this cannot be done without plenty of money."

"Why, this minute you said you would retire far away from town life," interrupted Olinda, "and that you desired nothing beyond hay-fields and strawberry-beds?"

"So I did," he answered, taken aback at having got somewhat out of his depth; "but one could not always live in seclusion, without some little change. What would my wealthy titled relatives say? What would all the nobles and people of distinction I am so intimate with say? They would think me an outer barbarian. The moment I was married my relations and friends would insist upon my presenting my wife, and giving a series of entertainments to introduce her into society. How could all this be done without money, and plenty of it too?"

He perceived he had made an unfavourable impression, which he hastened to repair.

“This trying ordeal, though, would soon pass over,” he added, “and then for unbounded happiness in strict retirement; then for love in a cottage; then for the peaceful hour when two fond hearts would beat together as one!”

He expected that Olinda’s ambition would have been stimulated by hearing of the greatness and worldly prosperity of his kinsfolk and acquaintance; but the arrow had fallen short of the mark and harmless, for Olinda cared for none of these things.

Her conduct perplexed him. Hitherto her open genial manner encouraged him to regard her as easily wooed and won; whereas, to his surprise and vexation, he found her hard to manage far beyond what he expected, obstinately refusing to see or notice the cautious feelers he threw out.

Every attempt had been a *coup manqué* hitherto, proving the difficulty of the task he had taken in hand. He resolved to try flattery next, knowing its fatal power over the female breast.

In the course of conversation he had discovered her passionate fondness for music, and at his request she played and sang for him some pretty ballads, on which he lavished enthusiastic encomiums.

“These charming melodies are quite new

to me, Miss Somerton," he exclaimed with warmth. "To my taste they are perfectly beautiful."

"I am glad you like them," she answered, blushing. "They are my own composition."

"Are they really?" he exclaimed in well-feigned amazement. "Such high-class melodies shed brilliant lustre upon your genius. I was unaware I had the honour of knowing so gifted and accomplished a musician."

As he lounged through the room, he looked over some water-colour drawings that lay in a portfolio on one of the drawing-room tables, for which he expressed warm admiration.

"Your handiwork, no doubt, Miss Somerton?" he inquired, turning towards Olinda.

While the colour mantled afresh on her velvet cheek, she smiled assent.

"Ah! these are perfectly marvellous," he went on, administering copious draughts of intoxicating adulation, for he perceived this to be a string on which he could harp as long as he pleased. "Wonderful talent! Amazing genius! Transcendent ability! What accuracy of drawing! What power of colouring! What force of chiaro-oscuro! You are a thorough-born artist, Miss Somerton. Had you been compelled to work for your livelihood, you would have amassed a princely fortune."

And as he spoke he held the drawings up

before him, as though absorbed in admiring contemplation.

Her first instinctive impulse was to suspect this exaggerated praise; but he was apparently so earnest, and his compliments seemed so genuine, that she put the thought from her as a shameful calumny.

The scarce-hidden bait had been swallowed greedily, and so far he had succeeded, which his practised eye failed not to detect. The process should be repeated, he determined, and this time with greater boldness of attack.

“What a universal genius you are, Miss Somerton!” he continued, drawing close beside her on the sofa where she sat. “You are a first-rate instrumentalist, a charming singer, a skilful artist, an accomplished linguist, and a matchless leader in conversation of every description. As to your beauty and figure, it would be fulsome and presumptuous on my part to pass any comments; but this I will say, if you permit, that you must be conscious what pleasure your company confers, and what an ornament you are in every society. Thrice blessed the man who can win your hand and heart! You are perfect, Miss Somerton,” he continued, partly following out his sinister plans, and partly giving free rein to genuine enthusiastic admiration for her loveliness and her mental attractions—“absolutely perfect!”

And Olinda bordered as nearly on perfection as our poor weak frail nature will permit.

"None of us are perfect, Monsieur St. Bertrand," she replied rather dryly; for such freedom of speech she considered a liberty, even from one with whom she had become so intimate. "Alas! I am far, very far, from being perfect!"

But she had underestimated her worth. How few arrive so near the standard of excellence!

A woman possessed of her rare and priceless gifts is, of a truth, a noble work of the Creator's hand. What a blessing, what a crown of glory, to him fortunate enough to possess such a heaven-born treasure!—that is, provided the treasure be not marred and tarnished.

With Olinda the brilliancy of intellect that stamped her as lifted to a giddy height above the generality of her sex, was held in due subjection and balanced by her womanly attributes—by her gentleness, her lovability, her warm affectionate nature, her sweetness of temper, her prudence, and her delicate sense of virtue. Had it not been for that one besetting sin of inordinate vanity, what a faultless character would hers have been!

Ah! vanity is the snare by which so many of the weaker sex become entangled—the rock on which so many suffer shipwreck—the road down which so many are hurried headlong to ruin.

A certain nameless place, we are told, is paved

with good intentions ; and of a surety the intentions of countless fallen ones were far removed from evil when first they hearkened to the fulsome smooth-tongued flatterer's voice, and greedily drank in his guileful tale.

"Easy is the descent of Avernus," and what was at first harmless levity becomes developed—and oh ! how rapidly !—into guilt and shame, all through vanity, and an ear greedy for praise.

Yet would woman be anomalous, unwomanly, deprived of all vanity. It is inherent in her nature, and one of her leading characteristics. It is, in a word, her life, her being.

But how draw the line of demarcation between justifiable laudable vanity and reprehensible perverted vanity ?

Woman's mission is to please, to soothe the heart of man and win him, to find favour in his sight, to make him look on her with the eyes of esteem and affection. For the attainment of success she must, of necessity, have a large amount of reliance on her power of attraction—she must have *amour propre*—she must have vanity.

Where is to be the limit ?—where the Rubicon ? At what point shall it be said, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther" ?

For woman's sorrow no such hard and fast boundary can be defined. The force of early education, good sense, conscience, and religion

must be trusted to point the way, and to guide aright the footsteps of the weak.

A little "wine maketh glad the heart of man," but a great quantity stupefies him and transforms him into a contemptible sot. Yet who would seek to impose on all a uniform allowance which none should exceed? Such an attempt would not only be futile, but also in the last degree quixotic and absurd. Man must be left unfettered to exercise his own judgment and discretion.

In like manner must woman be trusted to shun folly and frivolity, to preserve her good name, and to keep herself unspotted from the world.

A mind such as Olinda possessed is doubtless a priceless boon. But, alas! is it not a dangerous snare as well? Does it not even become at times an actual curse to woman? Does it not tend to make her restless, unhappy, and discontented with her lot?—to render her unfitted to discharge faithfully the duties of her station in life?

In man ambition is proper and honourable. It is one of the attributes of his nature, firmly implanted within his breast; for by the just exercise of this godlike quality he is impelled onwards to utilise his heaven-born talents, instead of burying them in the ground or hiding them under a bushel, and thus drawing down upon

his head the stern displeasure of the Divine Giver.

Countless outlets for the development of his intellect are freely vouchsafed to him in the various liberal professions, in trade, in commerce, and in other multifarious walks of life. Brilliant careers lie open for him to choose from, in following which, should he be favoured by fortune, his diligent exertions may be rewarded eventually with wealth, honour, and renown.

On the other hand, how few the opportunities presented to woman for earning renown in the great world through the exercise of her abilities, save in the thorny paths of literature, or in pursuit of the fine arts. Almost every door is closed against her.

To shine in conversation becomes then almost invariably her sole means of passing and eclipsing rivals for fame; and what a fruitful source of temptation must this prove to a woman of ambitious spirit, panting and thirsting for distinction! What an opening is thus offered for receiving the homage of flattery! And once feeble woman suffers the deceitful tongue of the flatterer to pour forth his fulsome adulation, who shall say whither she may wander, into what abysses she may fall, in what tangled mazes she may be lost?

Therefore, as a general rule, is not the possession of great mental endowments of doubtful

advantage to the weaker sex? Is not the high cultivation of those talents a dangerous experiment? Are not the ambitious tastes and aspirations so engendered too prone to lead to discontent and unhappiness? Is not a gentle, loving, confiding, feminine spirit a far more inestimable boon—a more excellent gift?

These are questions hard to answer, problems hard to solve, nuts hard for crackers to ope.

The truth is, no positive immutable generalisation can by possibility be arrived at in the matter—no Mede and Persian law can be laid down, for each separate case must of necessity be judged upon its own intrinsic merits.

Later on, if she marry, woman will discover whether wisdom had dictated her early worship of the graven image. Matrimony is a crucial test for deciding whether her talent-development during her unmarried state was prudent, and whether its results are likely to promote her future happiness. But then, will not the test come too late—too late for her—too late for him she weds?

How gifted soever a woman, few exist who sigh not for the married state as the blissful realisation of their dreams—the crowning triumph of their hopes—the goal of their warmest brightest aspirations. Consequently the object—the sole aim—of their girlhood should be preparation for this grand transforma-

tion scene. The future, not the present, should arrest their attention.

Some of a certain age, with a tinge of blue or of the blues—unprepossessing fair ones—may perchance be found among the gentle sex, who affect to regard man with distrust and aversion as an unfeeling taskmaster, a daring usurper, a heartless concentration of hard-hearted tyranny. But, happily for the good repute of our species, such unwinsome examples are of rare occurrence, and may be dismissed from the thoughts as unworthy of serious notice, for Nature holds not a vacuum in greater abhorrence than she does the female man-hating champion of woman's rights.

Such are the worshippers of single-blessedness, the scoffers at wedlock, the unbelievers in Hymen!

Olinda, it is true, believed that marriage held out no attractions for her; but this conviction arose from not knowing herself, and not being able to read her own heart. As to dislike for the opposite sex, such a feeling she never entertained. On the contrary, she courted their society, as being more congenial than that of most women she met. Yet she desired not to count as one of the blue sisterhood. She would be *spirituelle*, but not blue. Well she knew the disfavour with which a strong-minded woman is regarded. It is as difficult for a strong-minded woman who trusts in her strength of

mind to become a favoured denizen of the world, as it is for a rich man who trusts in his riches to enter into the regions of bliss.

But women who combine goodness and cleverness, who devote their time to diffusing happiness and doing their duty in the state of life wherein they are placed, are guiltless of the narrow-minded bigotry that characterizes some disappointed male-abhorring spinsters, whose spite mostly arises from failure in the far-off days of their youth to secure a prize in the great lottery of life. For the former the hope of home, with its calm pleasures, holds out boundless attractions. They cheerfully enter the conjugal state with a firm resolve of striving to please their husbands, and to make this aim the criterion of the extent to which they would be justified in still continuing to sacrifice on the altar of genius, under their new phase of life, so as not to prejudice nor exclude the pursuit of more solid and useful though perchance more commonplace occupations—so as, above all, not to wound the susceptibilities of their husbands by withdrawal from their society, or by mortifying assumption of the power to soar above their heads.

When a woman of delicately strung sensibilities and high mental culture marries, and is fortunate in mating equally, so as to find a partner worthy to be her companion, unmixed

felicity will be her portion. But among the fast "Young England" men of the period where discover such? How few of the loungers we see frequenting our clubs would prize her after the first impulsive freshness of love and youth had fled! Could she look up to a man like that? Must she not in her heart of hearts regard him with contempt? And for a woman to be indissolubly joined to one who fails to appreciate her worth, or to one whom she despises in secret, either because he is poorer, or of humbler origin, or less mentally cultivated than herself, is to seal the lifelong misery of both. Try how they may, they cannot conceal their thoughts.

Let the wife be placed in her true and destined position of helpmate to her husband, and what can be grander or more exalted than her unselfish devotion and love? But reverse the order, and put the woman in the uppermost seat—how few, good and pure though they may be, will bear unscathed the trying ordeal!—how few will pass unscorched through the flame!—how few, even though a certain amount of love, pitying love, may smoulder within their breasts, can control their ambitious aspirations, or refrain from exercising the power they are conscious of possessing!

And can a woman be deemed lovable who thus forgets her sex? Most assuredly not. Her inward perception of intellectual priority over

him she should revere must blunt her finer feminine feelings, must engender overbearing habits, must destroy her temper and disposition, and finally must raise her up as a jealous rival to, or perhaps even a domineering tyrant over, the man she vowed at the altar to honour and obey.

These anomalies—these inversions of the sexes—should not exist. They bring odium on the female sex. They bring shame and disgrace upon marriage, under whose sacred name such wrongs are perpetrated.

For, alas! it is after marriage, when woman's actions are no longer fettered, and when she becomes her own mistress, that her time of temptation arrives—temptation to rule, temptation to fall.

Such, hereafter, would be Olinda's hour of danger.

When Olinda heard St. Bertrand declaring his passionate admiration in such fervid strains, she should have nipped in the bud these amorous professions, as she had no intention of accepting any proposal of marriage. A woman who had become sharpened by mixing in the world would have done so.

Her reproof was so mild that he scarce noticed it. But she could perceive he was chagrined, and for even this feeble effort to stay the voice of the deceiver, she volunteered to apologize. Praise was like music in her ears; she could not

close them against its fascinations, nor dismiss him by whom it was uttered.

On hearing her humble herself by asking forgiveness even his hard heart became softened, and for the first time he experienced pure undefiled love. Drawing her towards him, and taking her hand in his, he fondly exclaimed, "Adorable girl! I love you to madness! Oh! make me the happiest of men by saying you will be my bride."

"Impossible!" she answered kindly. "My intention is never to marry, but I shall always feel the greatest pleasure in receiving you as a friend."

"Just what I want," he inwardly muttered, his wicked foul designs reasserting their sway. "Now I am free—I am safe. Though all the fiends below oppose me, this *ravissante Anglaise* shall be mine!"

CHAPTER III.

WITNESSES.

SELIM MUSTAPHA and Yakoub believed that they had been unobserved, and that the crime which had been perpetrated was known to none save themselves.

But they were mistaken. All they did, before going out into the darkness of the night to make away with their victim, had been witnessed—all they said overheard—even their very looks had been scrutinised and noted.

The deathblow of the hammer driving in the nail aroused Azzahra from sleep as well as the Quahouadji. So weary were her limbs, and so exhausted did she feel, that she would fain have turned to rest again; but the lengthened and animated conversation between her father and Yakoub, although carried on *sotto voce*, banished sleep from her eyes. She listened, and she distinctly heard her father speak. The lateness of the hour, added to the lowness of tone in which the two conversed, excited her curiosity, and she

noiselessly approached the door of her chamber that she might hearken to what was passing.

The dreadful words that fell upon her ear so filled her with horror and fear that she remained transfixed as it were to the spot—stunned and speechless.

Could she have heard aright? she asked herself tremblingly. Her father a foul cold-blooded murderer?—the father she idolised with such pride and devotion?—the father she honoured and respected with such pure, innocent, reverential love? No—no! impossible! Without incontrovertible ocular demonstration she could not, would not, believe, even after hearing his own confession, that her darling parent, to whom she looked up with all a child's impassioned adoration, could be guilty of such abominable black-hearted villainy.

Panting with breathless excitement, and eager to know the worst, Azzahra determined to see for herself, and discover what terrible scene was taking place in the adjoining apartment.

A chink aloft, where the bedroom-door fitted badly, allowed a narrow line of light to gleam in, by which she perceived the space was sufficiently large to look through. Gently lifting a small table, she placed it so that she could mount upon it and observe without fear of discovery her father's movements.

Deep was her consternation at beholding her

parent, as he stood with opened mouth and distended eyeballs, a scowl of deadly vindictive hate playing over his hard cruel features, assist to strip the dead body of the man she had heard him proudly boast that he had deliberately murdered in cold blood.

Scarce could she suppress the wild impulse to scream aloud with righteous indignation when she saw this, and when she beheld the two men drag away the denuded corpse to its clandestine burial; but the profound fear in which she held Selim Mustapha sealed her lips. Kind and affectionate though she had ever found him, she well knew that she must never cross his path, never dare to thwart him in his purpose, never rouse his black, suspicious, revengeful temper.

To her inexpressible relief, she heard the key turn at length in the outer door, and she knew they had departed with their ghastly burden. Then she gave way to her excited impassioned feelings, and, hysterically sobbing aloud, sank upon the floor.

In a moment the faithful Kredoudja was by her side, startled in turn out of sleep by the noise of the fall, and strove to pour words of comfort into the ear of her prostrate mistress. But Azzahra refused to hearken to the devoted girl, or even to notice her offers of service, while her features remained stamped with blank silent amazement and shame. Of nought could she

think save of that terrible catastrophe, so revolting to her pure noble nature. Her whole soul was wrapped up in silent contemplation of the hideous scene, and in anxious self-communion as to the course she ought to pursue.

As soon as Azzahra began to recover, Kerdoudja, following her example, lost no time in mounting on the table, which she perceived had been moved, to look in over the door, rightly judging that her mistress had been reduced to such a condition by what she had seen in the adjoining chamber. She saw her master was not there; she saw the dead man's clothes lying on the floor—the Spanish dress the spy wore in the street; she remembered the voice in the thicket; and she comprehended all that had occurred—all that had so scared and terrified her young mistress. Her ready perception told her they had been tracked, and that the pursuer had been slain.

“Allah be praised!” she muttered as she descended from the table; “we shall no longer be hunted down like dogs.”

This exclamation was overheard by Azzahra, and the knowledge that this dread secret had been discovered by another filled her with terrified bewilderment. Though burning with shame and humiliation, a moment's reflection showed her the prudence and the necessity of opening her mind to the devoted attendant, now that she

knew all, and of appealing to her fidelity to keep what she had seen locked within her breast; for of Kredoudja's faithfulness and prudence she had often received ample proof. To her astonishment Kredoudja displayed not the abhorrence she anticipated, seeking rather to extenuate and even justify the foul deed of blood.

"How otherwise could my master have acted?" calmly remarked the Soudanese. "This man would doggedly persist in following our steps all day, so as not to suffer us to escape. Were we not bound, then, in self-defence to kill him? Most assuredly we were; and richly he deserved his fate. Had he been a believer in the Holy Prophet he would have merited some compassion for the necessity that demanded his death. Not so this spying traitor. What was he, after all, but an accursed dog of a Frank?—only one of our hated conquerors, whose fate is not worth a moment's consideration? I would have slain him myself without the smallest compunction—with as little concern as I would stamp my foot upon a locust!"

How readily, alas! will the mind of loving gentle woman become inured and reconciled to scenes of cruelty and crime and bloodshed! In all ages of the world this fatal tendency may be traced—a deplorable feature in poor debased human nature, repugnant at first sight to all preconceived notions and experiences respecting

the soft winning attributes of the weaker sex, and which we incline to repudiate angrily as a base and baseless calumny. Yet does history adduce too many instances to admit a doubt or a denial of the melancholy fact. The sanguinary gladiatorial combats under the Empire of the Cæsars; the unequal struggles in the arena between wild beasts and prisoners condemned to death, as at Treves, where the Emperor Constantine the Great turned a hundred thousand captives into the amphitheatre to be devoured by lions and tigers, that they might make a Roman holiday; the burning alive of heretics in the Low Countries and Spain by the Inquisition; the demon-like barbarities perpetrated throughout the French Revolution—appalling scenes which woman ever fondly loved to grace and patronise with her smiling approving presence—all furnish abundant evidence to demonstrate the truth of the accusation. So do the bull-fights of modern Spain, and the ferocious cruelty of the females in savage tribes, even to the present day, towards their captives and enemies.

Who does not know of the Empress Faustina holding down her pretty little white thumb, the signal for *vae victis*, the death-warrant of the helpless defeated gladiator, writhing before her at the amphitheatre in the agony of his mortal wounds? In Vikram and the Vampire, that most wonderful of Oriental tales, a fair young

princess is described by one of the characters in the story as "a woman, and therefore a possible murderess."

This ungallant language is in most instances, Heaven be praised! a gross libel on the fair sex. Still there can be no question that once woman unsexes herself, and departs from the inherent gentleness and loveliness that should characterize her nature, she may descend but too readily into the lowest depths of degradation and wickedness.

No instance could be more striking than that of Kredoudja. She was warm-hearted and affectionate, gentle and kind. Yet she stood gloating over the hideous outrage, and ready without the slightest compunctive twinge of conscience, had the part of avenger fallen to her lot, to become another Judith or Jael, and herself commit the diabolical assassination.

Azzahra sought not to reason her out of this bloodthirsty mood, partly through the desire to join her in considering her father's act a matter of hard necessity, and partly through a strong morbid craving to hasten into the room where the crime had been perpetrated.

Prompted by the strange greedy curiosity inherent in her sex to investigate and gloat over the minutest detail connected with a cruel murder, Azzahra cautiously opened her chamber-door and crept forth into the outer room. She

desired, above all, to examine the dress dragged from off the dead man, that she might ascertain whether the Spanish costume were, in truth, the same she had observed upon the man who hovered around their path on their way out of the city.

As she turned over the braided jacket of dark-green cloth, a small memorandum-book fell from the breast-pocket on the floor. Quickly Azzahra picked it up, and she could not withstand the temptation of looking whether any entry had been made within tending to throw light on the past career of the dead, or to tell whether he had been in reality a spy of the French Government. On removing the elastic band and undoing the clasp a small crumpled scrap of paper met her eye, which she unfolded and perused. The first words she read were—

“MEMORANDUM.—Selim Mustapha, late an Agha in the south of the Sahara, now deposed and residing in the Quartier Arabe at Algiers, I have strong grounds for suspecting to be even now in constant secret correspondence with the rebel tribes in the Desert oases. I have even been informed by our native spies that he is Si Sala their chieftain, and the leader of the gang that have broken out in revolt; but, as yet, no reliable proof can be obtained, for the Arabs will invent the foulest calumnies to betray one another through mere greed of our gold. All my efforts to entrap this traitor have failed

hitherto, but my reputation is at stake on hunting him down; and do it I will, come what may.

“Years ago his wife Ayesha carried on an intrigue with the Marquis de St. Bertrand, father of the present Marquis, now quartered with his regiment in Algiers. One of Selim Mustapha’s children, named Azzahra, is believed to be the offspring of this amour. The mother has been divorced, but has remarried, and is supposed to be living in one of the oases of the Sahara.

“Query.—Should Selim Mustapha ever elude our vigilance and get away from Algiers, will he try to meet her clandestinely there? The fool had faith in her to the last, and refused in heart to believe in her betraying him and intriguing with another—above all, with a Frenchman. She must be discovered and closely watched whilst he continues absent from Algiers. No such certain way to catch a criminal as to keep a sharp lookout at his old haunts, and at those he is likely to frequent.”

What a hideous discovery for the unhappy Azzahra! What a heavy misfortune to have fallen upon the head of the trusting simple child! The paper fell from her hand, and she sank down on a bench, burying her face in her hands, overwhelmed with grief and shame. Could these terrible statements be true? she wondered. Could it be true that she was the despised offspring of an adulterous amour?

Could it be true that her mother, whose name she had ever cherished and revered, whom she had so often implored her father to bring back to his arms, had been false to her plighted vows—had been guilty with this French marquis? Could it be true that her mother's rivals and enemies, the other wives of Selim Mustapha, had good reason, after all, for turning her husband against her and driving her from her home? Alas! alas! she was too dazed and bewildered to tell, too downstricken to reason. But she determined to lock the secret in her bosom; she determined that her father should never gain possession of this document, this voice from the dead, this crushing bill of indictment; she determined he should never know the damning evidence it contained of his wife's perfidy. Woman-like, she clung to her fellow-woman in distress.

Thus the world loves to act, no matter how unworthy and depraved may be the culprit it seeks to shield, who is fortunate in possessing beauty, rank, power, high position, and, before all, command of wealth—so long as no overt act such as must force society to withdraw its countenance has been committed; so long as no positive proof of actual guilty misconduct exists; so long as a contemptible *mari complaisant* throws a convenient sheltering cloak over the frail one's unblushing transgressions. Perchance

the petted, fostered, smiled-on, courted sinner may be far, far more deeply and foully polluted, more degraded in mind and soul, than many a poor helpless wretch driven to shame, despair, and peradventure to death, in cruelly disproportioned punishment for unthinking levity at some heedless moment of weakness, but who has suffered the misfortune to let her sin be found out and published abroad. No mercy for such an one! Down, down let her crash headlong to the bottomless depths of the pit, without a single soothing word or look of pitying compassion! Forgiveness may not be hers, though she seek it carefully with tears, for she is penniless, friendless, helpless. From her issues no fountain of favours; no mystic wand is in her hand, to open the treasure-stored caves of wealth and fame for the fawning, lying, hypocritical sycophants ready to vie in crawling servility at the feet of any, however lowly and despised, who has but the smallest boon to confer. Let her lie down to die in a ditch or on a doorstep, befitting end for a shameless abandoned profligate!

So exclaims the cold, heartless, misjudging world, while it applauds with self-seeking enthusiasm her prosperous sister who bears an overflowing cornucopia in her arms, and who has had the deceptive skill to conceal her wanton excesses behind a dazzling encircling halo of homage and success.

Well, poor thing! let her enjoy her triumph while she may. It will be but shortlived, after all; for youth and beauty, with the love and adoration that follow in their train, will not endure for ever.

And in the last hour, when life is hanging in the balance, and the spirit is preparing to take its flight from earth to the land of the unknown, which of the two, think you, will have the more peaceful end? Will it be the lowly repentant outcast, despised of man?—or will it be the flaunting favourite of fashion, who has revelled in the pleasures of sin for a season, but who lies tossing on her deathbed, a prey to bitter remorseful agony at misspent hours, deserted and forsaken by the gay companions and admirers that were wont to press in eager crowds to her side?

Ah! the butterfly votaries of pleasure shut their eyes with wilful perversity to the truth that lies spread out before them in vivid distinctness. They think not of the engulfing vortex so close ahead, into which the surging waters are hurrying them with headlong speed. The hungry roar of the cataract howling in greedy gluttony for its prey, and rapidly becoming louder and louder, is fraught with no significance to their ears, strikes no thrill of trembling terror into their senseless souls, steeped in debauchery and crime.

They think not, they refuse to think, upon these things, that so deeply concern their everlasting peace.

What a life ! what a death !

How much has society to answer for in permitting the existence of such a hollow system of profligacy !

This contemptible truckling to successful shamelessness—this patronising of guiltiness and sin—this open encouragement to vice, by holding out a premium to its commission if undetected and unexposed—this permission to a wicked, brazen, abandoned woman to roam at large up and down the earth, like a dangerous wild beast or a poisonous reptile, contaminating and spreading pollution amongst the young and the innocent—all these foul plague-spots taint society and cry aloud for forcible suppression.

Azzahra bestowed no thought on the course she was so fondly pursuing being carried out thus to its legitimate logical conclusion. Far from advocating such pernicious principles, had she seen the matter in its true colours, her pure undefiled nature would have shuddered and recoiled with horror at the idea of lending her countenance to the unmixed evils of such a deplorable condition of society, from which every right-thinking person must shrink in disgust and indignation.

Devotion to her mother formed the sole motive

that influenced her thoughts, and this blind affection led her to arrive at conclusions that she would have spurned with scorn under other circumstances.

To her mother she had always tenaciously clung, because she was bowed down by heavy calamity; and she clung to her now more than ever, with these far heavier clouds of misfortune, these dreadful accusations of infamy suspended over her unconscious head. Poor divorced wife though she was, after all she was her parent, and as such claimed her filial love and compassion, no matter how grievous soever might have been her transgressions.

Thus reasoned Azzahra with her noble sympathetic heart and her unsophisticated mind. She trembled for the broken-hearted, spurned, neglected outcast. But she also trembled for herself.

Her father's vindictive remorseless disposition she well knew. She knew that, did he once suspect her of not being his own child, his ardent passionate love would turn into bitter hate. She knew he would pursue her mother to the death, would abhor and banish herself for ever from his sight, as a despised accursed thing.

This, through the force of habit, appeared at first sight the greatest misfortune that could befall her. Had he not tended her with fond

care in helpless childhood? Had he not ever loved and caressed her—ever gratified the slightest desire of her heart—ever honoured her above the children of his other wives? Yet, when she reflected more deeply, she wavered. Was he not now a foul assassin? Crime in every shape she shuddered at and abhorred, thanks to the guidance of her Christian preceptress, but, above all, the taking of human life. How then could she remain with one—how could she associate with him and feign to love him, although her father—whose hands were deep-stained with the blood of a fellow-creature!

In which direction did the path of duty lie? she asked herself sorrowfully in tears.

In which direction did her inclinations lead her? she might have added. Insensibly her thoughts recurred to that terrible scene on the Blidah road, when she was ruthlessly torn from her lover's arms; and she thought that if along with him now she would have escaped witnessing these soul-chilling horrors, which cast such a new flood of light on her father's character, and made her feel so strong a desire to fly from his presence. Reason how she might, she could not reconcile herself to the theory that the end had justified the means, or that assassination was under any circumstances allowable as a means to escape from a difficulty. Kredoudja's logic failed to convince her, and she came to

look upon the parent whom only an hour before she had tenderly loved as a vile and common assassin. Better a thousand times, she thought, perish themselves than thus stoop to the commission of such a hideous crime, and with such cruel treacherous premeditation!

How she wished that Kredoudja had not held her back when plunging with Henry into the depths of the thicket, through whose dense tangled masses they would probably have got away in safety, to pass together a life of endless love and bliss! Now he was lost to her, and to follow was impossible.

How could she fly from her father's face? And, even if she did, whither should she go?

These were questions she long endeavoured to solve, but found they were insoluble. Such a change of life as flight would entail she saw was beyond her reach. Friends she had none who would consent to receive her under their sheltering roof; plans for the future she had none; above all, money she had none, which she well knew, notwithstanding her life of retirement, was an indispensable requisite. She must therefore meditate no more about the path of duty or the path of inclination; she must make up her mind to follow the path of self-interest; she must remain with her father and share his fortunes, whether for good or evil. She must dissemble. She must learn to think

composedly of him and his great wickedness, so as to let him detect no trace of change in her demeanour. The task would be difficult, but it must be accomplished. When their journey was over, and they were once in the depths of the Desert, the wild life and the constant ever-varying excitement would divert her thoughts, she hoped, into other channels, and make her better enabled to endure the dread woes that oppressed her.

Then again memory would revert to her lost lover, and her mind would vacillate. Long she pondered. Yet the longer she pondered the weaker became the resolution she had formed to remain and confront such a weighty load of sorrow. A lurking desire crept sometimes into her mind, in spite of the difficulties and dangers that beset such a step, to fly back to Algiers, to seek out her Christian lover, and to throw herself on his mercy.

In the end she resolved to form no final plan as yet, but rather to wait till the morrow; then she would meet her father face to face, and see whether he betrayed the signs of remorse and humiliation for his loathsome act which she hoped to witness, and which would materially tend to remove the abhorrence and the repugnance she felt towards him, as well as her growing desire to leave him for ever.

Azzahra had remained so long wrapped in

profound contemplation of the terrible secrets she had discovered so unexpectedly, that the alarm of Kredoudja was at length aroused, who hastened out and entreated of her young mistress to come back to her apartment.

“Your father and the Quahouadjî must soon return,” she exclaimed in agitation, “and if they find us here we are undone.”

The justice of this remark could not be gainsaid, and Azzahra suffered her waiting-woman to lead her away; but first she took up from the table where it lay the gold ring belonging to the dead man, intending to keep it as a remembrance of the dreadful scene. This, however, Kredoudja would not allow, urging with apparent good reason that its absence would of a surety be noticed, and a strict search would be made by the host for an object which might hereafter become such strong evidence of the crime having been perpetrated in his house. Azzahra owned the justice of this argument, and waived the point with the less reluctance, as she had already secreted about her the pocketbook and its contents.

Shortly after the two young women had re-entered their chamber Selim Mustapha and his companion made their appearance, having deposited to their satisfaction the dead body of the murdered man, where they fondly hoped no eye would ever see their ghastly burden more.

Noiselessly Azzahra again mounted upon the table, and watched the movements of the two with intense curiosity and with breathless excitement.

While they were lifting the clothes of the dead, to be deposited by Yakoub in a place of safety, until he could find a favourable moment on the morrow for burying them out of sight in the ground, the sound was heard of some heavy object falling on the floor. This Azzahra at once knew to be the gold ring which she coveted so much, but which her father and Yakoub had evidently forgotten, owing, no doubt, to the preoccupation and excitement of performing their loathsome task; for she saw them look carefully round in every direction, but without success, to try and discover from what cause the noise proceeded.

Perceiving, therefore, that no danger could come of taking the ring, now that its existence had escaped the recollection of the conspirators, her desire to obtain possession returned. As she watched from her vantage-point, she had the satisfaction shortly of seeing Yakoub leave with the Frenchman's things. Soon after her father lay down on a carpet before the fast-expiring embers, and was speedily wrapped in deep sleep. She then crept stealthily out of her apartment to feel under the tables for the fallen ring, which she was fortunate in discovering after

a few moments' search. Returning with her prize she lay down on her couch again, and, overcome with the weariness of travel and with the frightful mental agony she had undergone, she soon slept as soundly as her father.

CHAPTER IV.

UP AT BOU-ZAREAH.

IN the hope of influencing Olinda for good, Henry Wilton resumed his visits to the Villa Isly.

One day he went to escort his relatives up the Heights of Bou-Zareah, to enjoy the balmy breezes and the lovely prospect from the summit.

He had considerably modified of late his resentment against Olinda for her unfortunate intimacy with the Marquis de St. Bertrand. He had considerably modified his own despondency about Azzahra's threatened dangers. Of both cases he took a more cheerful and sanguine view, and hoped for brighter days. He hoped his cousin would awake to the dangers she incurred. He hoped his loved Arab and his loved cousin would both escape from the perils that threatened to engulf them.

Olinda rejoiced to see his wonted good spirits come back by degrees, and to see his face radiant with smiles again.

“The bright cheerful way in which you have come to-day reminds me of old times,” she affectionately began, “and gratifies me more than I can express; for I am sanguine enough to believe that the change proceeds from your having commenced to shake off your ill-starred allegiance to that dreadful heathen.”

“On the contrary, Olinda,” he replied, “what makes me so light of heart is thinking of that day on the Sahel I saw her, spoke to her, pressed her wildly to my heart, almost prevailed on her to fly with me and be mine for ever. She gave me a solemn pledge to return to Algiers ere long from the Desert, whither she has departed with her father, when she will become irrevocably my own, and we shall never more be parted. This is what makes me so joyous, Olinda—so very, very happy! Hitherto I have only brooded tremblingly on the hardships and dangers that will surround her during her long and wearisome journey; but since last we met I have learned to look at the bright side of the picture, and my heart is full of hope and happiness once more.”

Wilton did not tell his cousin of the lowly and degraded condition in which the party were travelling, nor that the father of his beloved was a rebel outcast hunted down by the French police. Even his wild unreasoning devotion would sometimes become rudely shaken, though

perhaps unconsciously to himself, when he thought of the unpleasant episode he had witnessed on the Blidah road. Then, again, these reflections would make him sigh to rescue Azzahra from a life so unsettled and uncongenial to her tastes, loving her as fondly and loyally as ever. Such wayward and unaccountable inconsistencies prevail in lovers' hearts!

The intelligence that the Arab had left Algiers on a distant journey, though her absence would prove so painful to Henry, was welcome to Olinda; and she resolved to make another attempt at disenchanting her cousin, in the hope that what she said might sink into his heart and after a time bring forth fruit.

"Ah! believe me, Henry," she said in her most winning way, "you will considerably modify your opinions and feelings before her return. In maladies of the heart it is surprising what wonderful cures are effected by time and by separation from the beloved object. The dainty morsel is no longer at hand to tempt the appetite, and the idea of a *réchauffé* becomes downright alarming."

"You mistake my nature, Olinda," he interrupted, "in deeming me capable of such instability of character—of such baseness and pusillanimity. Olinda, I love her more than ever! I love her because she is both gentle and simple, because she is natural and unversed in

the ways of the world. I love her because I know she loves me with pure devotion, which will make her ever strive to secure my happiness. Life, even at the best, is but short. Why then not seize the fleeting hour? Why not make our sojourn here below smooth and unruffled as we may? Your nature is cold, unloving, Olinda. You cannot comprehend the mighty, the overwhelming power of love when once it seizes on the soul. It is intoxicating—it is glorious! It is the only joy that makes tolerable our selfish, monotonous, hateful routine of existence.”

“My poor Henry, you lean on a broken reed,” she kindly replied, laying her hand on his. “In your blindness you overlook two most important facts. One is that her father possesses absolute control over her actions; he will remorselessly bestow her in marriage on one of his own race, in spite of all her entreaties and protestations, sooner than see her become the outcast bride of a hated Giaour. The other is that these Mahometan women are mere senseless machines—mere degraded animals—having no ruling principle, no sense of right and wrong, no feeling of honour or virtue, no soul. Such is she whom you would make the cherished one of your bosom. Oh! delude not yourself, my poor infatuated cousin, by vainly relying on the truthfulness and fidelity of a

wretched outcast, grossly ignorant of the simplest principles of religion and morality!"

"Pardon me, Olinda," he interrupted, deeply hurt. "You forget I told you that I have held converse with Azzahra, and proved to demonstration that your precipitate and superficial conclusions concerning her are most erroneous and most unjust. Think of the Marquis de St. Bertrand and yourself, Olinda, and temper your severity.

"But cease. Here comes my aunt."

This hint was sufficient to ensure silence, for from Miss Thornton all secrets were hidden—before her no hearts were opened. Her tongue was an unruly member, so that whatever was told in the strictest confidence soon became published abroad and proclaimed upon the housetop. From no evil intention did this unfortunate and inveterate habit proceed; it resulted solely from a morbid desire to pry into her neighbours' affairs and to communicate her discoveries.

Driving up the picturesque heights of Bou-Zareah, past one of the luxurious summer palaces of the Deys embowered in groves of almonds, oranges, pomegranates, and cypresses, and past woods filled with a rich undergrowth of wild laurestinas, they found themselves in the warm bright sunshine on the summit, in the centre of one of the most magnificent panoramas

imaginable—the views finer even, because more elevated, than those at the Villa Isly. Here came into sight the vast plains of the Metidja, which stretch from the Sahel, of which the Bou-Zareah hills form a part, to the distant Atlas. Far away, along the wild scrub-clothed heights by the shore, rose up the wondrous Tomb of the Christian—mysterious and striking feature in the glorious landscape. When, and by whom, was it built? In whose honour, and to whose memory, was it erected?

Many are the traditions accounting for its origin, but no clue has ever been obtained. No hieroglyphic inscription tells its story to future generations. No architectural peculiarity in its beehive-shaped form points to any age or epoch. There it stands alone on its storm-blown height, a landmark to the mariner and the traveller—a grand monument of wonder and impenetrable mystery.

The foreground of the lovely picture is in harmonious keeping with the artistic and original character of the distance and middle distance—one of those peaceful æsthetic cemeteries peculiar to Mahometan lands, high up among hills, amid the songs of happy birds, lighted by the bright beams of the sun, studded with the fresh foliage of trees—far, far away from the turmoil, the noise, the strife, the hatred, the folly, the vice of the seething,

festering, polluted city. They seem to speak peace and repose—to woo to their tranquil bosoms.

But, notwithstanding their external beauty, one hideous drawback prevails. The occupants of their graves are for the most part interred coffinless, never with more than a slight wooden shell, and but a few inches below the surface of the ground, where the wild beasts of the field, with their hungry maws and their scraping claws, hover close at hand, ready to drag away, in their resistless voracity, the large stones and stems of trees piled up together to protect the dead from their attacks.

A small upright slab of wood, slightly carved at the top, marks each resting-place of the many. But graceful koubbas, the size of a small square room, with whitened sides and projecting tiled roofs, stand above the sainted Marabouts who repose there entombed. They are shaded by venerable palmettos, as large as moderate-sized palm-trees, forming striking and pleasing objects to enliven and diversify the landscape with their rich pictorial effects.

Native women—some wearing veils, but most without; all equally filthy, equally repulsive—were lazily lounging, surrounded by squalid children, outside a cluster of wretched huts erected out of the debris of some large ancient mansion that had once flourished on this fair

secluded spot in the days of the Turks. At a short distance a native funeral wound up the hill, bearing the dead, wonderful to relate, in a shell-coffin—proof that the deceased belonged not to the uncared-for vulgar herd.

Long Olinda gazed with the enraptured eye of an artist at the marvellously beautiful prospect, longing to sit down and commit it to paper were she alone, and not compelled by the dictates of good breeding to stifle her inclinations for the sake of her friends. But she resolved to embrace an early opportunity of returning, to seize the prize and make it her own.

She was much struck by seeing, for the first time, native women appear in public without yashmaks, those in the town being so scrupulous about concealing their features, and she called Wilton's attention to the circumstance. But he answered not. His eyes and thoughts were intently fixed upon the spot below where he had held his delicious though fleeting converse with Azzahra, and left her surrounded by such sorrow and danger. Had she and her companions, he wondered, made good their escape from the agent of police who pursued? Or had the man succeeded in tracking them down? Should he ever behold her again? Should he ever see the promised white kerchief floating in the breeze from her casement? Hope told him

he should; for, even were Selim Mustapha arrested, it was improbable that his young daughter would be detained likewise and prevented from returning to the shelter of her father's house. In his wild visionary reveries he began at times to hope that Selim Mustapha might be imprisoned, for then, thanks to the accommodating assistance of Kredoudja, he should have Azzahra all to himself. But these incoherent meditations were rudely interrupted by Olinda, who lost patience at his abstractedness and his neglect to respond.

"Henry, what are you thinking of?" she pettishly observed, taking hold of his hand. "You seem to forget my very existence, you are so wrapped up in mysterious contemplation."

Then she added playfully, after he had apologized with a condemned look, of which she well understood the cause: "Tell me this moment the reason these bedaubed and unrefreshing women wear no veils over their faces. Are they not considered highly immodest by their own people?"

"I suppose not," he replied, "or most assuredly they would be flagellated into propriety by their male relatives."

"Do you mean to tell me the Arabs beat their women?" she asked, filled with astonishment and incredulity.

"Such is the fact," he replied, "and often for

the merest trifles, or even from sheer caprice. But, as regards veiling, the same scrupulosity does not prevail throughout the interior that is seen in towns. Even the Touaregs, the terrible robber-tribe of the Sahara, mounted on their white dromedaries, though they hide from view their own faces with a black veil, allow their women to remain uncovered. The reason for this striking difference between life in the City and in the Desert I cannot tell. Perchance it is because those living in the country can be better trusted to let their charms be gazed upon than those in the town, who have greater temptations and greater opportunities for transgression."

"Then you are no blind confider in the fair inmates of the Harem?" she said interrogatively, as she looked fixedly in his face. "You do not believe in the doctrine of the lock-and-key? You think that evil may creep within the guarded portals of these gilded family prisons as well as into the unprotected mansions of the outer world?"

He appeared not to notice her observation, and she refrained from pressing for a reply; but he bit his lip so as to make the blood nigh start forth. Making no comment, however, he led her with apparent good-humour into the koubba of the holy Sidi-Nouman, the most famous Marabout who reposes in

the burial-ground, to show her where the saint was laid.

They were obliged to stoop down considerably before they could enter the low narrow doorway, which stood always open that all might freely enter to pay their homage to the saint. In front of them, as they gained the interior, stood four small upright posts marking the corners of the spot where the holy man lay buried, joined together by planks nailed to their sides, but raised only a few inches above the ground.

"This is an original arrangement—a monument, as it were, inside a monument," observed Olinda, as they sat down on the side of the lidless and bottomless box.

"In the most frequented part of the Bazaar at Tunis," Wilton continued, "one of these memorials has been placed in honour of some sainted Marabout, who ought to be indicted as a common nuisance for blocking up the crowded thoroughfare."

To Henry's annoyance his cousin now resumed the conversation which had been interrupted by Miss Thornton at the Villa Isly.

"You positively can think of nothing but your Mahometan incognita, Henry, I can see plainly enough," she began in a fretful tone. "You are in spirits or out of spirits just as your fancy prompts you to think of what may

be happening to her. Oh! I want so much to learn the whole truth. I want to know what passed between you and her during those few brief moments you were together. I want to know your reasons for the faith that is in you. I want to know what grounds you have, beyond the girl's own simple assertion, for thinking that she has received even the most humble rudiments of education. In short, I want to know how such a spell has been woven round you by this wild child of nature. To me the whole seems inexplicable. I cannot comprehend how a sensible man of the world can contemplate making such a blind reckless sacrifice of his life."

"My dear Olinda, this faith is an instinct," he replied, "and defies all ordinary rules of definition, calculation, or explanation. It may not be logical, nor even reasonable—it may not bear analysis; nevertheless, it is powerful and incontrovertible. My sensations respecting Azzahra I care not to pry into too curiously; sufficient that I respect her and love her. You think she is not capable of development for good; I think otherwise, but why I am unable to tell. Perhaps I resemble the ancient Roman Christian who replied, when sneered at for giving his adhesion to the doctrine of the Trinity as promulgated by Athanasius, 'I believe, because it is impossible.' Even so, it

may be impossible to transform Azzahra into a civilised member of society and a good Christian; but I believe in her firmly, and that is sufficient for my purpose. I want not to examine too closely the minutiae of how I arrived at the conclusion."

"You speak like one bewitched," she said, with a shrug of the shoulder and a look of deep sorrow.

"Well, I am bewitched, and I wish to be bewitched," he replied. "Witchery or no witchery, such love as I feel is a rare epoch in a dull dreary life, and I mean to drain the delightful cup to the dregs. Take heed lest you get bewitched likewise, Olinda!" he added. "The Marquis de St. Bertrand is getting power and control over you, though you know it not."

Darkness cast over the interior of the small Marabout, through its only aperture being blocked up by the figure of some one entering, interrupted the *tête-à-tête*, and Miss Thornton stood revealed before them.

"I never saw such a pair," she exclaimed, lifting herself as she cleared the low threshold of the koubba. "You two never lose an opportunity of flirting."

"Never," rejoined Wilton with a bitter smile. "Witness the day on board the Atlanta when we sailed to Cape Matifou."

"I believe that was but a lovers' quarrel after

all," the old lady returned, casting a shrewd scrutinising glance at her nephew and niece.

Frederick and Geraldine fortunately came running into the koubba in time to interrupt this silly perplexing effusion.

"Guess who has just arrived," exclaimed Geraldine—"a great favourite of yours, Aunt Alice."

Looking nervous and agitated, Miss Thornton inquired whether it was Edwardes.

"The very man," answered Geraldine; "and here he comes."

A huge grey-and-white dog accompanied Edwardes, on whom praises were liberally bestowed.

"Lion is a fine fellow," he answered. "He comes from Cauterets in the Pyrenees, one of the *gardiens des troupeaux* that drive off the wolves and bears at night from the folds where the sheep are enclosed. He is to be a great character on board the Atlanta, and you will find him a welcome companion in our future yachting excursions, whenever you honour me with your company."

"Dear me! If he is so savage as to fight wild beasts, I hope he will not bite me," nervously exclaimed Miss Thornton.

"On the contrary," replied Edwardes, smiling, "he is more likely to save life than to destroy, for he is a first-rate swimmer."

"How invaluable he would be should any one fall overboard!" observed Olinda, stroking affectionately the noble intelligent head of the dog.

"Not a very likely contingency, however," rejoined Edwardes; "for I have no intention of sailing far from shore, or even going out in the yacht except in fine weather, until my final departure in spring for Europe in company with our friends the swallows."

"Most fortunate I was," he continued, "to return to Algiers this way from the Druidical burying-ground where I have been passing the morning; it is a most agreeable surprise to find you all here."

"Druidical burying-ground?" Olinda exclaimed in amazement. "Why, the Druids were the priests of the Celts, and surely no Celts were ever in Africa?"

"Pardon me for contradicting you," he replied. "Until a few days ago, when I first heard of these singular remains, I was of your opinion; but since then I have carefully studied the subject, and own that I was mistaken."

He then told that the cromlechs in the cemetery at Cheraga were supposed to be those of a cohort of Britons in the service of Rome, an important inscription discovered seeming to set this point at rest.

When he had finished, Olinda expressed great

interest in these relics, and said how much she would like to visit the spot.

"I wonder whether any other ancient Celtic graves exist in Africa?" she continued.

"There is a similar burial-ground of large cromlechs at Djelfa, far to the south," Edwardes replied, "where the same cohort may have also been stationed."

This scientific conversation greatly pleased Olinda; but the rest of the party, Miss Thornton in particular, were highly irritated at the way in which their relative engrossed Edwardes once again, and they soon framed an excuse for breaking up, to return homewards.

On their way down they passed the holy well in the Frais Vallon, where divorced Mahometan women congregate to pray for fresh husbands, and, if young and good-looking, to have their petitions granted.

CHAPTER V.

AN AMERICAN FRIEND.

WILTON'S way down to the town from the Villa Isly lay past the open piece of ground outside the Constantine Gate, where the stoutly built, benevolent featured Kabyles from the Atlas range were in the habit of hobbling their camels and leaving them to feed and rest, while entering the city themselves to congregate in the numerous *cafés maures* frequented solely by natives along the neighbouring Rue D'Isly.

Several of these patient animals were being laden by their masters for the return journey to Kabylia, and were uttering their peculiar wailing moan while receiving their burdens. A couple of ill-tempered ones—bad characters, at whose acquisition the doctrine of “natural selection” had clearly been lost sight of by their purchasers—were spitting, showing their teeth, and (as Miss Edwardes remarks in her charming book of travels, “A Thousand Miles up the Nile”) were evidently “swearing” at their tormentors.

For some moments Wilton paused at this rendezvous to survey the busy bustling scene, as well as to study the intelligent kindly faces and active well-knit frames of the sturdy mountaineers, the unmixed descendants of those terrible Numidian hordes of which Hannibal's Carthaginian armies were mainly composed, that so nearly humbled the proud city of Rome in the dust and blotted out her name from among the nations. And, in these days of winter campaigns, the enervating dissipations of Capua would have been escaped—Rome would have been no more!

As Wilton was crossing the Place Bresson an American gentleman joined him, whose acquaintance he had recently formed while sitting under the row of huge spreading palm-trees in front of the Régence Hotel on the Government Place. This man was a singular compound of contradictions. Although young and of prepossessing appearance, he perpetually made himself ridiculous by the way in which he dressed and by the peculiarity of his habits. Well-educated, and attached to literature and scientific pursuits, he persisted in marring his mental advantages by an inveterate habit of boasting, in the presence of English especially, about everything connected with his country. Yet it was done in a friendly spirit of *bonhomie* which gave no offence to his listeners. He was a thorough

citizen of the world, having travelled in many lands; still, through having been reared in early youth far away from the busy haunts of men, his manners were at times brusque and uncouth. Yet, although such a confirmed and undeniable American, his pet foible—his vanity—was to copy the English in everything, so that he might be considered as belonging to the very pink of fashion, and be mistaken for “a Britisher” by the French of Algiers.

Wilton chanced to have met through life several of our Transatlantic cousins, for whom, by reason of their mental endowments and their gentlemanly deportment, he entertained profound sentiments of regard and esteem. Wherefore, as his new acquaintance differed from them, Wilton rashly set him down at first as but indifferent company; but the judgment formed by his first impressions was lamentably at fault, and he soon gladly found out what a mistake he had made. The heart of John Johnson was in the right place, and whatever defects he had were all superficial; so that, in spite of his weaknesses and shortcomings, he was a man whom any nation might well feel proud to reckon as a citizen. It is true he was an exception to the general rule—a *rara avis*—an oddity, it might be, but notwithstanding a fine honest specimen of human nature.

Johnson went up to Henry to invite him on

board the yacht of a friend—an offer gladly accepted; for Wilton had learned to appreciate at their proper value the many sterling qualities of his new friend, and to overlook his harmless eccentricities. Besides, in a small place like Algiers, where society is limited and where amusements are scanty, a man who has a friend that keeps a yacht is regarded in the light of a public benefactor, to be encouraged and patronised.

“You are fond of yachting, I guess, stranger?” inquired the American, with a slight *souffçon* of nasal twang.

Wilton replied in the affirmative; but added that the only yachting man he knew at Algiers was his countryman, the owner of the Atlanta.

“That is just the very man we are going to,” returned the Yankee, surprised; “and a down-right honest good fellow he is. Yonder is the yacht too,” he added, pointing to the Atlanta, as she swung at her anchor, with a delicately shaped cane, whose head was of gold profusely studded with turquoises, and which he held by a hand covered in rings set with large precious stones, the other hand being encased in a light-pink kid glove.

As they walked along the Boulevard de l’Impératrice, which occupies the sea-frontage of the eastern portion of the city, towards the small boat that lay at the stone steps of the Pêcherie,

waiting to take them on board Edwardes's cutter, Johnson exclaimed, in his brusque free and easy manner:

"Splendid girl that I met you walking with the other day. By Jove! if I had a companion like that beside me, I know what I'd go in for. Would not I just pile it on thick? And I bet her heart is as good as her face."

"My cousin, Miss Somerton, is thoroughly amiable," replied Henry rather stiffly, for he did not like to hear Olinda spoken of in such offhand flippant terms. He held that such remarks regarding one he so highly cherished and looked up to bordered on impertinence, though manifestly no offence was intended.

"I knew it," the American went on, in no way abashed by Wilton's frigid manner, nor by learning that the girl was his cousin. "That deep, deep intellectual look, that pure seraphic expression, are absolutely perfect. Did she not come out strong the other night at the Governor-General's ball, with that pale-blue feather and all the diamonds in her hair, and her dress looped up with those pretty forget-me-nots? Perfect—absolutely perfect! Such melting eyes of heavenly blue!—such hair, like waves of limpid gold!—such a classically formed head!—such lips!—such a complexion!—such a figure! In short, such——! Well, the fact is, I never saw the woman could compare with her, or even touch

her, except a barmaid I once fell in with out West in America; but then she was reckoned one of the most scrumptious girls in all the *Yewnited States*."

This climax fairly aroused Wilton's indignation; but he made no reply, walking on in dignified silence. Johnson, however, soon returned to the charge.

"Your fair and bright-complexioned *Anglaises*," he continued, "are held in high esteem by our friends the French. You should just have heard the way all the officers were raving about your cousin at the ball! Quite right, too, for none there could touch her. First-rate as she is, however, I would back a few of our Yankee girls over the water to run her pretty close."

"You seem smitten?" observed Wilton, rather snappishly.

"Smitten? I should just think I was—that is to say, as far as mere admiration goes," Johnson replied. "But I guess somebody else is smitten in downright earnest—eh?" And he gave Henry a knowing wink and a nudge in the side.

By this time they had passed through the vaulted passages that protected of old the entrance to the Penon Isle, beyond which they found Edwardes's small boat ready to receive them.

On their way to the yacht, through the

shipping that lay anchored in the port, they swept past the venerable old Corsair galley that now swings lazily at her moorings—the sole survivor of the powerful fleet of fourteen captured by the French at the Conquest. They looked with interest at her quaint appearance. They thought of the scenes of horror she had witnessed, and the agonized shrieks of helpless victims that had oft resounded along her gore-stained decks, as she spread consternation through the length and breadth of the Mediterranean, defiantly waving at her masthead the blood-red ensign of the Corsairs.

“Good thing these Algerine pirates met their merited chastisement at last,” Wilton observed, “and were swept off the face of the earth! Our friends the French deserve the gratitude of every nation bordering on the Mediterranean, or trading on its waters, for breaking up such a nest of ruffians, who extended their lawless depredations round the shores of Italy, Sicily, Spain, and France—every country, in short, not subject to the dominion of the Porte.”

“You are right,” answered Johnson. “The French showed more brains and more pluck than you Britishers. Why, in the name of Fortune, did you not keep Algiers when you had got it? You went to all the trouble and expense of bombarding and taking the town—right in front too, instead of attacking from the

heights above, as Charles V. and the French were wise enough to do—then the moment you succeeded you sailed away, and left the place to become as great a haunt of villainy as ever.”

“And wisely too, in my opinion,” replied Wilton. “What did we want to remain for, after we had carried out our plans and destroyed the power of the Corsairs?”

“Granted—you did destroy their power, and most effectually too; but only for the moment, as you well know. How soon they built and equipped afresh a powerful fleet of pirate galleys! How soon they recommenced their bloodthirsty marauding depredations upon the nations of Europe! In short, you fairly threw away all the blood and treasure you expended on the expedition.”

“Very true,” Wilton replied; “I freely admit the force of what you say. Somehow or other, this is how we manage matters in our country, owing to the folly of our governing class, who generally lose in diplomacy the advantages gained by our arms. Still in this instance England acted prudently. She would have found this wild inhospitable region an intolerable incumbrance, only to be held at the point of the sword, as it is now held by its present possessors. Louis XIV. was guided by the same cautious policy. When he conquered Algiers he

was too prudent to burden his country with such a worthless dependency to his Crown, wisely retiring, in like manner as we did, after Duquesne, his admiral, had reduced the fortifications, the arsenal, and the town itself to heaps of smouldering ruins. In his day he had fighting enough on his hands, and did not require a new colony as a nursery for soldiers, like the modern French. Our friends, however, make a fatal mistake in regarding their guerilla skirmishes with the natives as real warfare, for the mistaken confidence thus engendered was cruelly demonstrated by the boastful manner in which they commenced the German war before their preparations were nearly completed. They thought they had only to march to Berlin, after a few easily-won battles, dictating terms to the Prussian monarch in his own palace, and returning to France covered with glory and decorations."

"What you state is perfectly true," the Yankee replied. "But with regard to giving up a country after conquering it, on account of some imaginary difficulties as to its future government, we don't believe in that over the water. We go in for filibustering, and annexation, and all that sort of thing. Bless your heart, while you Britishers are thinking about a thing we take and do it! That's what I call business. However, let us be thankful that the French

were more game than you, else I guess you and I would not be here together to-day.

"Of course you know," he went on, "that these villainous Corsairs were under the protection of a favourite patron saint, opposite whose *koubba*, or tomb, they always fired a salute as they sailed out of harbour under their blood-red flag, to invoke, by this compliment paid to his memory, his blessing on their fiendish enterprises."

"I was unaware of the circumstance," Wilton replied; "but many instances have come to my knowledge of prayers being offered up in favour of undertakings that were not by any means in accordance with the laws of either God or man. Indeed, I once heard a pious clergyman declare his conviction that his father-in-law and his brother-in-law had been mercifully removed by death out of his path, in order that he might obtain possession of his wife and her large fortune, both these relatives being bitterly hostile to the proposed marriage."

"Just so," said the other. "That only proves the folly and bigotry of mankind. What would appear a monstrous crime on the part of others, in one's own case is glossed over, and made to assume a harmless or even a commendable appearance. No doubt these Corsairs of Barbary failed to realise the enormity of their outrages against society, and may possibly have even

attached a wild, chivalrous, romantic character to their nefarious profession, when success was sure to cover them with honour and renown in their own country. Otherwise they could scarcely have supposed that Sidi-Betka, their patron saint, would trouble himself about them or their lawless proceedings."

As Henry had never heard of Sidi-Betka, he inquired who and what had been this patron saint of the pirates.

"Although his name is unknown to you," answered Johnson, "he was a distinguished Marabout in his day."

He then related to Wilton how this saint, assisted by two brother Marabouts, is believed by the credulous inhabitants of the country to have contributed largely to the defeat of the Emperor Charles V. in his disastrous attack on Algiers, when the Spanish men-of-war were dashed to pieces on the shore during a raging tempest. Thanks to the well-timed incantations and pantomimic gestures of the holy men—smashing crockery on the shore, and wildly striking the waves with sticks at the moment they observed a vessel drifting to destruction—the Marabout saints, and not the storm, got the credit of destroying the hostile fleet. Thus they came to be held in great veneration ever after, especially Sidi-Betka, their chief.

"What a specimen of a saint!" exclaimed

Wilton—"a man who attained the honours of sanctity by the grossest falsehood and imposture!"

"Perhaps he was no worse than others of the same fraternity—who knows?" the American replied, with a shrug of his shoulders and a suppressed sneer. "Many of them are pretty much of the same kidney."

CHAPTER VI.

AZZAHRA'S RESOLVE.

THE breaking of day brought no comfort to the troubled mind of Azzahra, who still brooded terror-stricken over the horrors of the past night and the terrible discoveries she had made; but the longer she reflected, the more intensified became her feelings of shame and fear, the stronger the conflicting tumult of hesitation and doubt within her bosom.

Carefully she questioned herself many times while reclining on her couch, using the same arguments, weighing again the same considerations, as to whither duty should lead, doubting whether love should not be allowed to assert his sway and fling duty to the winds. Should she remain, she wondered, or should she escape? Should she discharge her duty to her parent by clinging to him, shielding him, and striving to love him once more, despite his great wickedness; or should she discharge her duty to society by fleeing from the presence of such

a monster, and boldly denouncing him as a criminal worthy of death?

Long she remained lost in anxious meditation, but naturally the habits of a lifetime must prevail in the end. The leap in the dark became too terrible to contemplate. Even in Christian lands how can a delicately nurtured girl of her tender years, but just emerging from childhood, face unprotected the rough buffetings of a cold, unsympathizing, uncompassionate world? For a Mahometan woman such a step is simply impossible; she cannot live alone without incurring the penalty of universal scorn and execration.

Besides, she felt assured her father would follow and drag her back, should she even succeed in making good her escape with Kredoudja, for how easily could they be traced and overtaken! Then would not her fate be immeasurably more pitiable, for what excuse could she frame for such unaccountable conduct? Would not her father have good cause for suspecting that his secret was known to her, if not to Kredoudja, and that they were shunning him in consequence? She shuddered to think of what, in his anger and his fear of discovery, he might do against the poor unoffending Black, or perhaps even against herself. No dissimulation, no pretended continuance of filial love, would then avail.

Azzahra deeply felt all this; wherefore she inclined towards remaining by her father's side, throwing in her lot with his, and endeavouring to discharge faithfully her duties as a daughter.

Her lover was torn from her, so whither or to whom should she go? Besides, would it be maidenlike to follow and seek him out? What course, in short, could she follow, did she suffer her abomination of crime to assume command of her feelings, and drive her from beneath the paternal roof? She and Kredoudja alone together in the world, how helpless, nay, how spurned and shunned, they would be!

This process of reasoning, though she knew it not, was altogether selfish. She thought it was filial duty and love for her father that kept her with him, but she laboured under a grievous misapprehension. In her present altered mood that love, at least for the time being, had been well-nigh extinguished by the discovery that the object she loved was a blood-dyed felon. Yet, though her love as a child was thus wavering in the balance, another and a deeper love was busily at work, helping to shake her simple faith, and urging her to depart from the haunts of sin and shame. How joyfully, she thought, would she fly to her Christian, if she dare, regardless of all dangers and risks! There she would be at rest, far away from these scenes of blood and horror.

Thus her distracted mind veered from side to side. Still the image of Henry Wilton was ever uppermost, and her thoughts invariably turned towards him as her ultimate saviour and guardian. When she thought, however, of throwing herself upon his protection, doubts arose. How would he receive her? Would he think ill of her? Would he look on such unfeminine conduct with disfavour, perhaps even with anger? How then should she decide? Her heart prompted her to go and to trust, but reason and prudence told her to stay.

Henry and she had been rudely severed apart, though she doubted not the fortune-teller had rightly said that they should often meet again. Till the blissful hour when she should see him and speak with him once more, her life would be as the life of a bird imprisoned in its cage. But she would wait on with patience, and meantime seek freedom from care in her new life, constantly endeavouring to escape from her father's presence now that confidence and affection had been shipwrecked and destroyed.

All that she had seen and heard that night weighed heavily upon her mind. Her father's crime, her mother's frailty, her own dishonoured birth—these were terrible secrets for the unhappy girl to retain locked up within her breast. So was the altered state of her own filial feel-

ings, and these secrets she dared not venture to reveal even to her confidante Kredoudja. Her mother's shame and her own were matters of too solemn moment to commit to the keeping of even the trusted waiting-maid. They were hidden plague-spots, skeletons in the cupboard, over which she must brood and mourn, unsympathized with, uncomforted, in the solitude of her own chamber.

Of all her sorrows, the knowledge that she could no more regard Selim Mustapha in the same light as of old weighed down his unhappy child the most, and inflicted on her the deepest pang; for she could only think of him henceforth as one to be shunned, as a contaminating pestilence, by all right-thinking men. That she should entertain such sentiments toward a parent, and such a kind indulgent loving parent, cruelly shocked her sensibility. Still those sentiments she could not control. The sound and pure precepts that had been engrafted on her mind had humanised her, and caused her to view with abhorrence the shedding of human blood, no matter how powerful the incentive.

After long and anxious communing with herself, she resolved to adopt the policy she had inclined to the night before—she would dissemble and wait.

Azzahra remained so long wrapped up in these gloomy reflections that the morning was

now well advanced, and Kredoudja aroused her from her reverie, fearing Selim Mustapha's anger were they not ready to resume their journey at the appointed time.

While beside the couch the Black noticed the pocketbook of the dead man and its contents in her mistress's hand, the latter of which Azzahra had evidently been perusing. The Soudanese instantly guessed the truth—guessed that Azzahra had taken them from the clothes of the murdered Frenchman, a conviction which filled her with the greatest alarm. She trembled for the consequences should this book and these papers fall into the hands of Selim Mustapha. She trembled still more lest they should fall into the hands of a stranger, to be turned into weapons of destruction.

So terrified did she become that she could not hold her peace, imploring her mistress to destroy these silent witnesses. But Azzahra gave no heed to the prudent and earnest exhortations of her waiting-woman, hurriedly pushing the papers back into the pocketbook with the intention of destroying the whole on the first opportunity. Yet day by day went past and she destroyed them not. That pocketbook and its contents seemed to possess a strange fascination for her eyes, and she postponed perpetually their destruction, keeping them next her breast as though they were a priceless treasure.

What momentous issues hung on the thoughtless act of negligence! What a powerful influence this small packet of papers, thus heedlessly preserved, was destined to exercise over her future life!

CHAPTER VII.

ON BOARD THE ATLANTA.

CLIMBING up the side, Wilton and the American stepped on the well-scrubbed and well-swabbed deck of the Atlanta, to which Edwardes and Lion bade their friends a hearty welcome.

“The yacht is always at the service of yourself and your party,” Edwardes hospitably observed, addressing Wilton, “if your ladies will favour me again with their presence on board during some of my cruises along the coast. I go in strong for archæology — Roman cities, temples, and that sort of thing—which perhaps they might consider dull work.”

“On the contrary,” interrupted Henry, pleased at the opportunity of getting Olinda away from the dreaded Marquis, “they take much pleasure in such expeditions, and I know will gladly accept your kind invitation. Miss Somerton, especially, delights in these pursuits.”

“Ah! charming girl! I know that from our conversations, and from the warm interest she

appeared to take in the Ruins of Rusgunia the last day we were out."

"When we struck on a sandbank and nearly got wrecked?" added Wilton, smiling.

"Yes; and your aunt maintains to this moment that we were wrecked," Edwardes answered, laughing heartily. "I trust we may never have a worse disaster.

"Miss Somerton was the means of my passing a most delightful day on that occasion," he continued, "notwithstanding the wreck. She is all intellect and soul. I have christened her 'the divine lady,' as Richardson touchingly calls the unhappy Clarissa."

"Capital idea, too!" interposed the Yankee. "I give you my solemn word, Miss Somerton is as good a specimen of an English girl as any man need ask to see."

"My cousin will doubtless appreciate the high favour in which she is held," Henry coldly observed.

"The fact is, I have come to this country pretty nearly for the sole purpose of exploring the old Roman remains which still exist in many parts of the three provinces," continued Edwardes, who had sufficient tact to perceive that Wilton objected to his cousin being made the subject of conversation in his presence by comparative strangers. "I fear, however, from what I have heard since my arrival, that the

French have committed frightful havoc and devastation upon these venerable relics ; not only demolishing beautiful ruins, priceless vestiges of the past, but likewise the rare and highly interesting manuscripts they found in the mosques and palaces, which latter the common soldiers employed to light their watch-fires."

"It is too true," Henry replied. "Wherever I have travelled through the interior I have witnessed universal spoliation."

And such, alas! is the case. Whenever extensive architectural remains are discovered a French colony is at once planted on the same site. Doubtless this is partly done through the vain, narrow-minded belief that France has received a mission to follow in the footsteps of the former Mistress of the World. But, alas! it is done chiefly on utilitarian principles ; for temples, forums, Christian churches, and all the glorious structures that once adorned the land are ruthlessly demolished, to yield up their priceless stores for constructing barracks, hospitals, prisons, and the dwelling-houses of the officials in the new settlements.

At Tebessa, near the Tunisian frontier, one of the most lovely and extensive temples in the world was standing when the French arrived, adorned with upwards of eight hundred and fifty columns of the rarest and most beautiful marbles and agates of all colours, but chiefly pink and

yellow, which the commandant of the station was determined to preserve intact; but the builder who held the contract for erecting the new structures offered the officer his daughter in marriage with a large dowry if he would allow the precious monument to be destroyed—a proposal with which the needy soldier was forced to comply, when the entire fabric was swept away and broken up for building materials.

“Such shameful barbaric destruction is utterly unworthy of any civilised nation,” indignantly exclaimed Wilton and the American.

“There can be no grosser vandalism,” Edwardes replied; “and it is amazing to find a nation so highly cultivated as the French thus bringing down disgrace upon its name. The only man who ever strove to stop these wholesale desecrations was Prince Napoléon while he was in power; but when the late Emperor deprived him of his position as Colonial Minister the disgraceful spoliations recommenced with renewed energy.”

“All the same,” exclaimed the American, “you Britishers are pretty good hands yourselves at demolitions of Roman antiquities. In the whole of England there is not one monument remaining out of the thousands that must have adorned your great cities founded on the site of their colonies—like London, York, Chester,

Gloucester, Winchester, Chichester, Manchester, Worcester, and a lot besides. With the exception of portions of the two great Roman Walls between Newcastle and Carlisle, and between Edinburgh and the Clyde, not a single vestige remains, and even these are insignificant."

After the conversation had continued some time, Johnson observed :

"I reckon, Edwardes, this is an uncommon dry boat of yours."

"Dry boat!" echoed Edwardes with pride; "I should think she is. She has never shipped a drop of water since I got her, except in an exceedingly heavy gale."

Seeing, however, a suppressed smile on the face of the American, Edwardes comprehended his true meaning, and perceived that the dryness referred not to the qualities of the yacht, but to the absence of expected libations.

After he had apologized for his remissness to show proper hospitality, he begged them to accompany him below, to the satisfaction of Johnson, who looked forward to the treat of a good glass of wine after the indifferent liquor they got on shore.

Their host then led the way to the cabin, which was tastefully decorated in white and gold, while large mirrors, panelled on the sides, reflected the rich *cérise*-coloured Utrecht velvet of the elaborately carved furniture.

"Here's to the health of your charming cousin, Wilton!" said Johnson, filling his glass. "Fair women for me—they are twice over better than dark. Bless you! nothing comes up to a nice fresh blonde, for your brunettes fall into a bad habit of getting coarse hair and muddy complexions."

"Quite right," added Edwardes; "these attributes of dark woman are a mistake."

"Algiers is well situated," the Yankee resumed, as he surveyed the city; "but nothing compared to New York. Bless you! New York is the finest city in the world!"

"Of course it is," Edwardes replied, determined to check the boastful spirit of the other, which was the more provoking on the present occasion, after his learned and agreeable conversation. "But New York has one irredeemable drawback."

"And what may that be, stranger?" inquired Johnson, lost in astonishment at such an audacious and unaccountable assertion.

"The same that enabled Lord Exmouth to sail within pistol-shot of those walls opposite and blow them to pieces," answered Edwardes.

"You are beyond me," said Johnson, looking more bewildered than ever.

"Don't you know," exclaimed the other, taking hold familiarly of his arm, "that whoever chooses can anchor along the Hudson in

the centre of the town and smash it into atoms?"

He was on such intimate terms with the American that he felt he could venture to say this in jest; and his friend, as he fully expected, took his pleasantry in good part, laughing heartily at the way he had been caught.

When Wilton and Johnson were taking leave their host begged of the former to name to the ladies that he had planned an excursion in the yacht to Cherchel and Oran, requesting they would fix a day for starting, should the weather prove favourable.

As Henry and Johnson, after having landed, were crossing the Place du Gouvernement, the latter and an elderly soldier-like gentleman exchanged salutations.

"That is a French General," observed Johnson, when they had passed, "whose acquaintance I made the other day on the Oran steamer. He married a native woman, who, I hear, has made him an excellent wife. A young son he had on board with him was a regular little wild Arab, both in manner and looks, who told me, with genuine spite, he hated me because I was English. When I denied the soft impeachment of British citizenship, the father thanked me warmly for my extreme kindness in disclaiming my nationality for the sake of propitiating his boy. Was not that good? Both persisted in

mistaking me for a Britisher, so I just let the fools have their way. Where is the good of contradicting people who are determined not to believe you?"

"Do you think the General did well in contracting this marriage with the Arab girl?" nervously inquired Henry.

"How can I tell?" the American replied. "They say the General rose from the ranks. If so, well and good. He was right to marry the woman of his choice, having no one but himself to please. Or, if a man of good position in life chooses to commit social suicide, discarding his relations for ever, to break fresh ground in new lands, he also does well to marry the woman of his choice, however humble and lowly.

"But there is no middle course—no halfway house—no halting between two opinions. After committing such a blunder as a *mésalliance*, no man can remain in his own country without losing his self-respect and becoming subject to a course of perpetual heartrending humiliations. The wife of his bosom is unceasing in urging him to take her among his relations—in short, to give her the position in society to which she considers herself justly entitled—a natural and praiseworthy desire which he himself feels eager to carry out. On the other hand, the relations, especially those belonging to the softer sex, receive her with cold distant formality—tolerating

her under protest, as it were—never inviting her to their houses except ‘on the sly.’ ‘Come and dine with us quietly, dear,’ is the mock-affectionate language employed by these fair but wary diplomatists; ‘you will find us quite alone. So much more sociable, is it not?’

“No, no; a man who makes this sort of marriage should cut his cable, and away to brighter skies and happier scenes.

“I speak of Europe, mind you, and of what they think and say in Europe. In ‘the States’ we are not so awfully particular; but, bless you! even there now we are getting our private clubs, and jockey clubs, and four-in-hand clubs, and polo clubs, and yachting clubs, and boating clubs, and skating-rinks, and all that sort of thing, on the most exclusively select and most strictly European principles.

“As yet, people don’t pry too closely into your private family affairs, or ask impertinent questions; but as for one from ‘the old country’ taking a wife from a class beneath him, he might just as well fling himself over the Falls of Niagara; unless, indeed, he be blessed with high rank or with great riches—still better with both—when, of course, he can kick the great sneaking world before him, and force his low-born wife down their throats in spite of themselves.”

Breathlessly Henry listened while the burning

words uttered by his companion were sinking deep into his heart. Would this then be the result of his union with Azzahra? he inwardly moaned—this the vortex into which he was about to take a headlong plunge? The idea was too horrible. Could it be that Olinda was right after all in the hard counsel she gave, backed as it now was by this man who knew human nature well? Must all his bright visions of felicity melt away like snow?—fleet past like morning mists before the rays of the rising sun? Must he ruthlessly tear himself from his pure loving adored Azzahra, for the sake of conforming to the cold, heartless, conventional laws of society? Must he seal his eternal misery, leading a hopeless, objectless, blighted existence for the remainder of his days, until the hour when death should release him from his woes?

The sword pierced his soul and he was speechless.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE WAY TO CHENOUA.

“RISE, Azzahra,” cried Selim Mustapha, knocking at his daughter’s chamber-door. “It is time to start; the way is far and weary to our halting-place to-night, and we must not travel too quickly, lest your strength should fail, for we have a long journey before us to where dwells the Kaïd of the Beni-Menasser.”

Azzahra was so overcome by the fatigues of the preceding day, and by the mental agitation she had suffered, that it was with difficulty she could rise to perform the long and scrupulous ablutions so dear to the followers of the Prophet, and to go through the remainder of her simple toilette—the mysteries of which were far less elaborate than those indulged in by the fair ladies of Europe, who sorely tax the patience of waiting-women by interminable hair-brushings and other adornments of the person on which they love to devote such fond care.

Her attendant was in no better plight than

herself, and would thankfully have indulged in a more prolonged rest before commencing another toilsome day's journey. But both felt aware that even moments were precious, and that no time should be lost in hastening away from the scene of such a terrible tragedy.

Azzahra feared lest, ere their departure, some emissary of the French police might by chance arrive while on a tour of duty through the country, having heard from the Quahouadji's wife that they paid frequent visits on such occasions. She doubted not that, were such an accident to happen, Yakoub, fearing the crime had been discovered, would confess all in his terror and betray her father, to shield himself, for she had heard the bitter lamentations he poured forth about the spy being murdered in his house. The man she reckoned to be a base mean-souled wretch, notwithstanding the estimation in which her father held his fidelity and patriotism, and to be utterly unworthy of having confidence reposed in his loyalty or honesty of purpose.

Independently of this danger, she trembled at the thought that her father himself might unwillingly show traces of agitation, after the lawless deed he had done, at the sudden appearance of an officer of police, which might lead to his arrest. Once imprisoned, what discovery might

not be made!—what catastrophe might not occur!

She saw too that, on account of the long fatiguing day's journey before them, her father was prudent in wishing to start early. How many weary hours, alas! must be passed on the road in her tired condition, unequal as she and Kredoudja were to such rapid travelling, and unaccustomed to such distressing hardships!

When she passed into the outer room, so soon as she and Kredoudja had got ready, she found it empty; neither Selim Mustapha nor the Quahouadji were there.

She remembered the dress of the murdered man, and she doubted not that the two had left to conceal in the ground these tell-tale evidences of the assassination. The justness of her suspicions their clay-stained papouches, together with the pickaxe and shovel they carried in their hands when they returned, too surely proved. As to the dead body itself, she had learned, from the whispers which reached her the night before, that they trusted to the wild beasts for soon destroying its identity. Her heart sank with fear and shame at having to meet her blood-stained parent; but by a strong effort she mastered her feelings, running forward to give him the accustomed morning salutation of filial affection. Outwardly that salutation was as warm and as loving as ever, but oh! it sorely

belied her innermost thoughts. She was deliberately deceiving him, deceiving the fond parent who idolised her!—she, the only object he cared for on earth!

Alas for poor weak human nature! It is desperately selfish as well as desperately wicked. Self is too often the sole idol we worship, though perchance we may know it not ourselves; and Azzahra formed no exception to the rule.

Since her eyes had become so cruelly opened to know good from evil, she thought but of herself and her own interests. She had fallen from her high estate of truthfulness and affection, to be transformed into a merciless intriguing hypocrite against her adoring father.

Oh! did some Power the gift impart
To read the thoughts of every heart,
What folly, treason, guilt, and shame
Would drag down many an honoured name!

Could Selim Mustapha have divined what was passing within the breast of his beloved daughter, he would have spurned her as an accursed thing, to be banished for ever from his sight. But he had implicit trust, like too many others in the world.

“Come, my poor dear Azzahra!” he lovingly exclaimed, as he drew his arm tenderly round her and led her forth, “we must resume our

laborious march. But cheer up, my child ; soon we shall suffer no more fatigues nor privations."

"These journeyings on foot will indeed prove a severe trial for Kredoudja and myself, my father," she said with a deep sigh, testifying her mournful anticipations, "and will sorely tax our strength."

"Well do I know this, my child, and bitterly it grieves your father's heart," he replied, fondly caressing her ; "but remember, you promised to share all my dangers and hardships during our sojourn in the Desert."

"And so I will," she answered proudly. "While strength remains I will not flinch!"

"Spoken like a heroine!" he exclaimed in delight. "And I doubt not your courage will bear you triumphantly through. The effort must be made, my beloved daughter. Meanly attired, as you see me, in this beggar's dress, what excuse, think you, could I offer, if questioned, for having my women mounted on mules, did we lucklessly chance to meet by the way one of the French gendarmerie on the patrol of his district? Would not such an anomaly be certain to awaken his suspicions? and the slightest circumstance that could possibly draw down suspicion I wish just now carefully to avoid."

Azzahra well knew the reason why he made this remark, but she held her peace. Cautiously she looked in his face to observe whether he

betrayed symptoms of remorse while the crime he had perpetrated was thus brought afresh before his mind; but his look was frigidly merciless, and she shuddered with horror at his cruelty and hardness of heart. Carefully concealing in her bosom the pocketbook and the gold ring of the murdered Frenchman, she started to accompany him on their weary pilgrimage, her mind a prey to mournful and foreboding reflections.

After proceeding for some distance Azzahra became so weak and footsore that she could move no farther. Faintness and dizziness almost stole away her senses, and angry blisters tortured her dainty feet, so that she was forced to throw herself helplessly on a grassy bank by the roadside. At length, finding she was utterly unfitted for travel in her present condition, her father and Kredoudja with difficulty assisted her to a *café maure* close at hand, the Quahouadji of which Selim Mustapha had known for some years. Here for two days the party were constrained to remain, a prey to unceasing gloomy apprehensions, until Azzahra had recovered sufficiently to continue their route—the wife of the Quahouadji bathing and anointing Azzahra's feet, and tending her with motherly care.

At length Azzahra was pronounced fit to make a fresh effort, and with many fears

and misgivings the party left their friendly shelter.

When they had got on a good way their road led past the large monastery of Staouéli, where they saw the Trappist Fathers busily engaged at their field labours, and toiling, doomed to perpetual enforced silence, in company with a few hired workmen. With the skill and industry of the brotherhood, who here largely act the part of pioneers of civilisation by means of their laudable example, they were making fresh vineyards and cornfields out of the rich loamy land just reclaimed, and now brought for the first time under cultivation.

Selim Mustapha and his companions passed likewise the large and odoriferous fields of sweet-scented geranium bushes from whose leaves the monks distil the famous fragrant geranium perfume of which Azzahra had ever been so passionately fond—pure and unadulterated scent, different far from the deleterious compounds concocted from tar and other abominations that adorn with their deceiving showy labels the counters of our modern European perfumers.

Several carriages from Algiers were drawn up along the avenue outside the gate of the monastery, waiting for their occupants, who were partaking of breakfast with the holy Fathers within—the frugal repast consisting of dates, oranges, cakes, honey, and conserves, followed by the

delicious "Trapista" liqueur made at Staouéli, and flavoured with a few drops of the fragrant extract of geranium.

Through these carriages Selim Mustapha threaded his way, and led Azzahra to the open gateway, where he desired her to look through at the splendid palm-tree growing in the middle of the central court.

"Beneath that tree," he sadly exclaimed, "stood the war-tent of the Turkish Beys who commanded our armies against the Giaours of France; and it was on the heights around that the fatal battle was fought, and won by our enemies, which lost us our liberty and our native land."

"But was it not, after all, merely a change of masters?" observed Azzahra. "Were not the Turks our masters then, the same as the French are now?"

"True," he sullenly admitted. "Still the Turks professed the same faith as ourselves, while these accursed French are foul Christian dogs, who abominate and hate us as well as our most holy religion."

"That they hate us I do not believe," she interposed, "though we remorselessly hate them, I grant."

"Believe not such a falsehood, child, as that they hate us not," he peremptorily interposed. "They do hate us, I tell you; they regard us as

vermin, and would gladly sweep us like flies off the face of the earth. Seek not then to palliate the crimes of such vile assassins and robbers, who have waded through torrents of lifeblood to confiscate our lands and property. Every one of them would I gladly slay with this right hand. Death is the meet reward for such perfidy as they have been guilty of, and for such spoliation as they have inflicted on the Children of the Free!"

"But now that they have conquered they act as they think just and right, doing what in them lies to govern uprightly, and to improve the wretched degraded condition of our country," heedlessly pleaded Azzahra, forgetful of the dangerous ground upon which she was treading, by repeating arguments often employed by Madame Lagrange.

"Is this then the spirit, Azzahra, in which you are coming with your father to the Desert?" he broke in, angrily surveying her. "You! my child—my most favoured child—pleading for my enemies!—framing excuses for their wickedness! You, who gave such solemn pledges that you would always remain by my side in my warlike expeditions to fight these Christian traitors to the death!"

"And so I will, my father! Oh! with what joy shall I see them conquered in battle!" she exclaimed with energy, for she became alarmed

at the fiery earnestness of his denunciations, and felt that she must disarm his resentment.

"Then what meant you by lavishing praises on the detested infidels?" he asked, somewhat mollified by the spirited words of his child.

"It was in sorrow and shame I spoke," she skilfully replied, seeing that his anger was becoming subdued, and that she might again speak with her accustomed freedom, "for I blush to own them our superiors. But can we remain blind to the fact that the French stand in all respects above our race in the social scale? Can starving natives living in filthy gourbis, knowing nothing of husbandry nor any other kind of civilisation, bear comparison with the industrious colonists in their thriving smiling homesteads who are beginning to spread over the land? You know they cannot, my father, though these foreign settlers, who seem raised so high over our level, are said to be only the refuse and offscourings of their own country."

Selim Mustapha owned himself powerless to refute the reasoning of his daughter, so he was perforce obliged to acquiesce in the unfavourable estimate she had formed of his countrymen, who unquestionably required the strong hand of power to restrain and keep order amongst them, though he revolted against the thought of that power being wielded by the hand of a stranger. But while Azzahra's hostile criticism wounded

his patriotic sentiments, the reason she gave for drawing these invidious comparisons soothed and pacified him, so as to prevent his anger being aroused anew.

“Alas! what you say is too true, my daughter!” he replied in sorrowful dejection. “But is that a reason why we should be dragged pitilessly down into slavery and trampled upon, or why we should not strive with all our might to shake off from our necks the accursed yoke of the stranger?”

“We will shake off the stranger’s yoke!” she exclaimed with enthusiasm, partly assumed and partly genuine, determined to remove altogether the dangerous feeling she had incautiously aroused. “But when once he has left our shores we will hasten to turn to good account the bitterly earned experience we have gained at his hands. We will raise the condition of our fallen abject race. We will govern aright with honour and justice. We will uproot the spirit of lawless disregard for the value of life and property that, alas! prevails. We will lead our people on to greatness and prosperity as a nation. Of old the Arabs were a mighty race of warriors, when they conquered these countries by their prowess and strength. Why should they not become prosperous, civilised, and powerful once more?”

To hear so much profound learning and

wisdom fall from the lips of Azzahra greatly surprised Selim Mustapha, who now felt for the first time what vast superiority her liberal education gave her over her fellows—even over himself; and he silently applauded the prudence of her poor mother in stipulating that she should be blessed with these priceless advantages. He saw that Azzahra was correct in every observation she had made, and he freely admitted with profound mortification the degraded condition in which his country was steeped, though up to that moment this manifest truth had failed to strike his illogical unreasoning mind. With blind ignorant wilful bigotry he had ever esteemed them a people noble at heart, although, through the force of untoward circumstances over which they had no control, ground down to the earth by tyrant oppressors who were far their inferiors in all the attributes that constitute greatness in man. Now this home-bred simple girl had opened his eyes, and taught him to see the folly of all the preconceived opinions he had held so dear to his heart.

“It would be a godlike work, Azzahra,” he exclaimed, aroused to visions of honour and power for himself, “to undertake the regeneration of one’s native land, to clothe her in smiles and in plenty, to elevate her sons, to make her great and glorious, as well as to make her free!”

“Worthy indeed of all praise would be such an enterprise,” she answered with warmth.

“But where find the man to embark in such a herculean undertaking?” he hesitatingly asked, for not even to his beloved trusted Azzahra would he reveal the wild dreams of ambition that in a moment had seized on his soul. “Alas! since the great Emir was lost to us none has arisen among our people with power or ability for the task.”

“Oh! my father, you are able and worthy to fulfil this mission, with your proud indomitable will,” answered Azzahra, filled with genuine admiration for her father’s brave and manly qualities, and losing sight for the moment of his foul transgression. So hard is it to give up fondly cherished habits!—to destroy old associations!—to rend asunder lifelong ties!—to break altogether and for ever with the times gone by!

“In the holy name of the Prophet, Azzahra, I will make the attempt,” he exclaimed, lifting his hands above his head and looking towards heaven. “You have aroused worthy aspirations within my soul, my child; may Allah assist me with his mighty power!”

As Selim Mustapha and the two young women were turning to depart, some of the ladies came outside the gate, the men of the party having passed into the monastery through the refectory

set apart for strangers, where the visitors had been entertained, to be shown the inner conventual buildings, which no woman was ever permitted to enter save the Duchess of Magenta, when the Marshal was Governor-General of Algeria.

Azzahra noticed that these ladies carried in their hands bottles of her favourite geranium-scent, purchased in the refectory, which they went to place in their carriages. A strong desire for this perfume, which would prove so refreshing by the way, came over her, and she entreated her father to buy her some from the monks at the Abbey-gate. Though so apprehensive that any should know he possessed money, or suspect he belonged not to the class whose garb he wore, he could not refuse his child's request, knowing what pleasure his acquiescence would afford.

Accordingly he went, though with hesitation and fear, and knocked at the door of the Abbey.

While he was absent one of the ladies went up and accosted Azzahra, whose bright golden hair, deep-blue eyes, graceful figure, and sweet expression made the lady think her the most lovely being she had ever beheld.

"My poor child," said the lady, kindly addressing her, "you look sadly weary and exhausted. Your delicate frame is not suited, I fear, for the fatigues you are undergoing. Will

you accept a trifling present, to add to your comforts on the way?"

Opening her purse, she then offered Azzahra a small sum of money, which the latter haughtily refused with a burning blush of shame and anger. The lady, offended at her intended act of kindness being thus misunderstood and her offer being disdainfully rejected, turned away in high displeasure, when the rudeness of which she had been guilty flashed upon Azzahra, and she would fain have followed to apologize. But it was too late! Those fatal words "too late!"

The attendant monk who came out in response to Selim Mustapha's summons—the only one in the establishment allowed to break his vow of perpetual silence, under any pretext or under any circumstances, after once becoming a member of the community—seeing, as he thought, a common beggar standing at the door, angrily ordered him away, and told him not to trouble with importunities for charity.

"It is not to crave alms I come," meekly pleaded Selim Mustapha. "I but want, O holy Father, to purchase some of the rare scent for which your noble monastery is famous."

"Begone, sirrah!" cried the Father. "What can a filthy creature like you want with perfumes you would never use, much as you might require them? Besides, how could such a tat-

tered mendicant afford to spend money on what is only a luxury for the rich?"

"The price I have with me, indeed I have; see, here it is," he said in a beseeching tone, and holding out the coin in his hand.

"It is bad money, I venture to swear," growled the monk with a scoffing sneer.

"Indeed the money is good," humbly interposed Selim Mustapha; "even now I got it in charity."

"Well then have your way, in God's name," answered the Trappist, scanning the coin to see whether it was genuine, and going to his cupboard in the refectory for some of the precious spirit. "Methinks you are not what you appear, or what you pretend, friend," he loudly called out for all to hear, as he came back and addressed Selim Mustapha, for though a monk he was but a serving-man in the Abbey. "Beggars do not travel with delicate young women who have attendants to wait upon them. Beggars do not waste their money on dainty trifles like this."

As he spoke he held up the scent-bottle to the view of the drivers of the carriages who were lounging about at hand, and who indulged in hearty merriment at the absurdity of a common ragged beggarman making such a purchase.

"It is but to revive my poor sick child, who is

faint from long travel, that I bought this," he replied, in considerable trepidation at the dangerous turn matters were taking.

"I don't believe a word of it," exclaimed a gruff voice close behind him. "You know very well you are travelling in disguise. Come now! tell us who you are, and what you are?"

Frozen with terror, Selim Mustapha looked round, when he beheld a gendarme staring full into his face.

A glance at the man's countenance, however, sufficed to satisfy him that he was unrecognised; so the bitterness of death passed away from before his imagination, and he recovered courage to reply.

"By the beard of the Prophet, I am travelling in no disguise!" he humbly whimpered; "I am a poor mendicant, even as you see, taking a journey afar with my child."

"How about the Black, then?" retorted the gendarme. "She is waiting-maid to the other—that is clear enough."

"I swear by Allah she is not!" continued Selim Mustapha. "How could a miserable wretch like me afford to keep a waiting-woman for my child, when it is with difficulty I can procure enough to sustain her and myself?"

"And yet you lavish money on perfumes! Come, tell the truth. If that Soudanese is not in your service, why is she with you?"

"She is merely journeying in our company, I swear by the Tomb of the Prophet," responded the other, "on her way to visit some friends!"

"To visit friends," repeated the gendarme, with a look of disdain. "Blacks do not travel to visit friends—they are too poor. Where then are these friends?"

"In Oran," replied Selim Mustapha.

"Is this true, girl?" continued the gendarme, turning to Kredoudja and closely scrutinising her face.

"Quite true," she answered with well-enacted self-possession.

"Strange! there are but few Blacks in Oran," he went on, musing, and looking suspiciously at the three. "And are you going to Oran too?" he inquired of Selim Mustapha.

"Allah knows I am."

"By what route?"

"By Bou-R'Kika and Cherchel."

"Why not have taken the train from Algiers to Bou-Medfa, and gone by Milianah?"

"So I would gladly, Allah knows, but that I am so poor—so very poor. I am forced to journey on foot over the mountains."

"Well, then, go your ways," the gendarme at length called out, to the intense relief of the party, in a tone of authority. "And mind, let me not catch you loitering round here, for I can plainly see some mystery exists. And as to your

looks," he continued, accosting Selim Mustapha, "I like them not."

"We purpose not to remain here," was the meek reply. "Ere night we shall be far hence."

"It is well," growled the other, as he turned on his heel to walk away and write despatches to the Cherchel and the Oran authorities, cautioning them to keep a sharp lookout for the mysterious travellers.

By this time the party of sightseers were coming out of the Monastery, and were preparing to depart. What was Azzahra's astonishment to behold among their number her adored lover, conversing with the fair lady who had spoken to her and offered her charity.

Intense joy at the sight of Henry overpowered her reason, and her first impulse was to let him see her, so that he might seek for an opportunity to say even one word ; but a moment's reflection told her the madness and danger of such a course. Quickly veiling herself, therefore, and drawing Kredoudja along with her, lest her presence might be revealed to Wilton by his recognising the latter, she turned sharp round and left the spot. Once she ventured to look back, when she beheld Henry still in deep converse with the fair lady, while her arm was linked within his, and her heart sank within her at the sight.

Oh ! could that be the fair woman, she won-

dered, who the sorceress told her would cross her path? Was that woman crossing her path even now, while she was powerless to resist her wiles—powerless to break her wicked spells?

The sorrowing girl burst into a bitter flood of tears, as she bemoaned her tragic fate in silence—happiness so often seeming within her grasp, yet never apparently to be reached.

Seeing this ecstasy of grief, her father concluded she was still labouring under apprehensions of danger from the gendarme, and felt compassion for the nervous dejection into which she had fallen.

“Cheer up, my poor child!” he whispered affectionately, as he hurried her on. “The worst is past.”

But he himself was far from feeling the confidence he tried to inspire. That terrible apparition had filled him with blank dismay, which he was still unable to shake off.

“When I turned my head and looked on the blue uniform behind me,” he groaned, addressing Azzahra, as they sought the highway again to proceed onwards, “my heart almost ceased to beat through sheer terror; I doubted not mine hour had come.”

“Never did I receive such a shock,” she replied, still pale with fear, and with agitation at the glimpse she had got of Henry; “I felt confident the man had come to arrest you.”

"Arrest me? Why arrest me, child?" he nervously asked, casting the while a cowering glance of conscience-stricken suspicion in his daughter's face. "He might follow my steps, as we were followed on the Sahel; but for what should he arrest me?"

"For absence from Algiers, of course, in defiance of the Government," she answered, with a ready appearance of confidence she was far from feeling, for she perceived that her unguarded remark had awakened thoughts in her father's lawless mind which might be fraught with danger.

"No—no, child, they would scarcely apprehend me for that," he observed with a smile of relief, his suspicious alarms dispelled. "They would merely order me back to Algiers and watch my house with redoubled vigilance, or they would track me to the Desert. As to any charge of disloyalty, they have no proofs as yet to justify my arrest."

"But would not more stringent espionage over your every action and movement be nearly as disastrous as actual imprisonment," she argued, "to one who pines, like you, to breathe the pure air of freedom?"

"Undoubtedly, Azzahra," he replied sadly. "As cruel to clip the wings of the captive bird as to cage it in its narrow cell. Then I could depart no more on my glorious missions to the South. Then would my dreams of conquest and fame vanish like mists of the morning."

“You could not then take your daughter away to the far lands of the Free,” Azzahra added, nestling to his side, “nor make me a Child of the Desert.”

“Nor make you a Child of the Desert,” echoed Selim Mustapha, with a kindly glowing smile of affectionate pride, as he gazed on his lovely daughter.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EVENING AT THE VILLA.

ON Olinda's invitation Edwardes went to share the hospitality of the inmates at the Villa Isly. The soft balmy air of the evening blew in such warm gentle zephyrs that the party remained conversing on the terrace, and admiring the surrounding scenes by the fast-fading light of day.

Edwardes told Olinda the pleasure it gave him to learn from her cousin that she and her relatives would accompany him in the Atlanta to Oran. He told her what an agreeable trip he anticipated, for he intended coasting the whole way, past a number of the archæological remains with which the northern coast of Africa teems, and other objects of interest along the shore. They would see Sidi-Ferruch, where the French expedition landed to conquer Algeria; the Tomb of the Christian; the Ruins of Tipasa; the white marble quarries and the bold headlands of Chenoua; Cherchel, the Carthaginian Iol; Mazagran, where a hundred and twenty-three

French Zouaves kept off for four days an attack on the walled town made by two thousand natives under the command of the Khalifa, or Lieutenant of Abd-el-Kader; besides many other places well worth a visit.

"Another attraction on board will be your friend the Marquis de St. Bertrand," he added with a smile, "whom I know to be one of your prime favourites. Though with a *soupeçon* of shallow conceit and insincerity, his company is most agreeable."

"You are very severe on my friend, and give him but an indifferent character?" she said with a smile. "However, you make the *amende honorable* by inviting him to meet me."

While Olinda was thanking him for his hospitality, and saying how much enjoyment she anticipated from the society of the Marquis de St. Bertrand and himself during the excursion, Geraldine ran out to announce that dinner was waiting.

"You were speaking of the siege of Mazagran," Olinda observed, when seated at table. "I always thought a great and decisive battle had taken place there, from the manner in which one of our most gifted writers, in a charming novel, the plot of which is laid in this country, speaks of 'the day of Mazagran,' and reiterates the importance of the desperate engagement fought at that spot."

“There was no ‘day of Mazagran,’ strictly speaking,” he replied, “notwithstanding the oft-repeated statement in the delightful book you allude to, and which I myself had previously remarked. Far from any battle having been fought, the besieged never dared venture outside the gates of the town, content with firing down from off the walls at the wild, yelling, undisciplined, bewildered rabble below, who could only reply to the deadly aim of the defenders with antiquated flint matchlocks that perpetually missed fire. The powder they used too was weak and worthless, being manufactured in the country by the Kabyle mountaineers. Had the investing horde possessed a single gun of even moderate calibre, or been versed in the simplest principles of engineering, they could with ease have battered down the weakly built exterior walls, in whose construction resistance to any combined systematic attack by the ignorant unscientific natives had never been contemplated. Besides, if they had had but a little knowledge and courage, they could without difficulty have blown in the town-gates, and then, owing to their vast numbers, made a desperate irresistible rush.”

“Had not Abd-el-Kader field-guns attached to his army?” inquired Olinda. “I think I remember reading of such. If so, why not make use of them on the occasion, and bring them into action against the town?”

“You are quite right, Miss Somerton,” Edwardes replied, “as to the Emir owning a few fieldpieces, which, by the way, the French maintain he got from England through the Empire of Morocco, whose Sultan was Abd-el-Kader’s ally. And it is probable enough that they were supplied by our manufacturers at home, as a matter of business, in the same way as we so insanely furnish materials of war to our own enemies, to be used hereafter against ourselves. But, as regards using these guns at Mazagran, you must remember that the town is on the seacoast, and that the Emir dared not run the risk of transporting artillery to so great a distance from his base of operations in the South. Cavalry and infantry, if the wild undrilled tribes he commanded were worthy of the name, could readily disperse if surprised and routed, whereas guns were certain not to escape capture. Besides, the large French garrison at Milianah intervened on the high ground of the Djendel, through which the only road lay, so as effectually to bar the passage.”

“Milianah itself stood a siege during one entire winter,” remarked Olinda. “Why did not Abd-el-Kader pass without attack the powerful fortress, against whose defences the engines of warfare at his command were powerless, and make a combined concentrated assault on Mazagran, which would then probably have fallen?

As to the artillery, surely light guns could have been transported across the hills, though no road was available, and the French garrison in Milianah was so small he would incur no danger by leaving it in his rear."

Edwardes was no little amused at the cleverness and intuitive perception of military tactics displayed in these remarks of the charming companion beside him.

"Quite right, Miss Somerton," he said with an approving smile. "You have hit the blot that destroyed any slight chances the Arabs had of even temporary success in their widespread rebellion—want of combination. Abd-el-Kader himself worked wonders, but he was feebly supported. He had no material to work with save the sheer brute force of men little better than savages. What could he effect with his two or three trained battalions, supplemented by a wild, heterogeneous, half-armed, untrained mob of cowardly cut-throats, useless except in the steep inaccessible recesses of the mountains? Making a stand in the plain with such a motley crew led but to annihilation and wholesale indiscriminate slaughter. However, as you remark, he should have brought all his available forces to bear on a weak place like Mazagran, instead of wasting his time at Milianah. Still, you must remember, he very nearly succeeded in reducing the place through starvation and death!"

Henry told of a train of light field-guns the French have organized in Algeria, which he passed on his road to Milianah. The guns as well as their carriages were borne on the backs of mules, in the same manner as we carry our mountain fieldpieces in India on camels.

“Had Abd-el-Kader possessed some light ordnance like these,” Wilton continued, “he could have taken them over mountains through passes unknown to his opponents, as my cousin just now suggested, and they would probably have been strong enough to blow in the gates of Mazagran.”

“Supposing even the Arabs had succeeded in breaching the walls, they would not have taken the town,” replied Edwardes. “These aborigines are such abject cowards, they would have shrunk from following up their advantage by making a bold dash through the breach. The slightest barricade thrown up impromptu and defended by a few resolute men would keep off the whole vociferating, gesticulating herd.”

And such is the case. Arabs fight well enough in safe positions protected by the covering shelter of rocks, mounds, or trees; and they will highly distinguish themselves in ambuscades, where they can shoot down unsuspecting foes before the latter get time to recover from the surprise of the attack. But they have no stomach for a manly stand-up fight in open ground, still less for a

single-handed encounter. Indeed, the danger the French incurred at Mazagran was from the failure of their supplies of food and ammunition before the siege could be raised by fresh troops coming to their rescue, far more than from the incoherent spasmodic assaults of the enemy, even though commanded by the Khalifa of Abd-el-Kader.

“By the way,” continued Edwardes, “there is an Arab leader in the South raising the standard of revolt. He must be some low worthless fellow, bent only on plunder; for surely no honest man in his senses, however patriotic, would dream of attacking with only a rabble rout a Government having sixty thousand trained troops at its command, and a vast reserve in the mother-country to draw upon in case of need.

“Do you remember that old Arab’s house we went to in the upper town,” continued Edwardes, addressing Henry, “to see his young son made a member of the Mahometan religion?”

“Perfectly,” replied the other, much confused at the turn the conversation was taking.

“The fellow has the reputation,” Edwardes went on, to Henry’s dismay, “of being the prime mover in this insurrection. Should he be, I hope he may soon be caught and get his rebel head struck off his shoulders. Did he not look a cut-throat ruffian?”

"He had a malevolent expression," Wilton replied, not willingly but of necessity. "But then he is wealthy and prosperous. Why should he embark in such an undertaking as you speak of, unless indeed through patriotism or romantic love of adventure?"

"Patriotism and romantic love of adventure!" ejaculated Edwardes scornfully. "Love of pillage and murder, you mean."

"The love of country is a powerful and sublime passion," interrupted Olinda, "which in some respects divests a man of his nature, and makes him cherish the land of his birth above every other consideration. It was this chivalrous devotion that impelled Decius to sacrifice his life, Fabius his honour, Camillus his resentment, and Brutus and Manlius their own children. Lately I read some noble instances of patriotic devotion in women. A Spartan woman had five sons in the army, and was anxiously awaiting tidings of a battle with the enemies of her country. Tremblingly she inquired of a messenger from the camp. 'Your five sons are killed,' exclaimed the man. 'Slave! I asked you not of them. How goes the day?' 'We have conquered!' he proudly replied. 'The gods be praised!' she cried, as she ran to the temple to return thanks to Heaven. Another Spartan woman, during a siege, saw her eldest son fall dead before her. 'Call his brother,' she un-

hesitatingly exclaimed, 'to take his place.' An Emperor of China, pursued by the victorious arms of a rebel chieftain, would fain avail himself of the blind respect with which a son in that country regards the injunctions of his mother to induce the conquering chief to cease hostilities. He deputed an officer to the mother, who with a dagger in his hand told her she must either die or prevail on her son to relinquish his pursuits. 'Does thy master think,' answered she, with an indignant and contemptuous smile, 'that I am ignorant of the sacred conventions that unite nations to their sovereigns, whereby the people engage to obey the monarch, and he, in return, engages to promote their prosperity and happiness? Your master who sends you here was the first to violate this convention, and he shall pay the penalty. Base executor of the orders of a tyrant! learn from a woman the path of honour and duty.' With these words she snatched the dagger from his hand, smote herself on the breast, and as she breathed her last exclaimed, 'Traitor! if aught of virtue still remains to thee, bear to my son this bloody dagger, and tell him to revenge his nation by slaying the tyrant!' Are not these noble instances of true patriotic devotion?" exclaimed Olinda in conclusion.

"And so you believe, Miss Somerton," continued Edwardes, not heeding her interruption, "that this Si Sala is an honest patriot? Mark

my words, he is some common robber, murdering and plundering for the mere greed of gain. May he be soon made to pay the penalty of his crimes by the military expedition the French are even now preparing to send against him ! ”

Wilton deeply coloured and bit his lip with shame and vexation at hearing the father of his Azzahra spoken of with opprobrium and scorn like this, but he could not deny the justice of Edwardes’s denunciations. Too well he knew Selim Mustapha’s complicity in these rebellious disturbances, though he remained silent on the subject, and shrank from disclosing what Azzahra had told.

The words that Edwardes spoke startled him and made him reflect ; they humbled him—they cooled down his impetuous ardour. Proud, powerful, and wealthy though Selim Mustapha might be, yet the disgrace of connection in any shape with one held in such contemptuous abhorrence he felt bitterly.

But then, he reasoned, were Azzahra his own, he would take her far hence, never to behold the man’s face more. What would it matter then who he was, or what he was ?

Besides, he had made no resolve whatever to marry—at least, no final resolve. Oft had he weighed the matter in his mind, but could never arrive at any practical conclusion. Azzahra he loved as passionately as ever ; he bewailed her

enforced absence ; he pined for her companionship. Still the die that should bind him for life had not been cast. No crisis had come, nor did he see why a crisis should be precipitated. The base thought of making the innocent confiding creature his mistress he scouted as an offence unto him. She was too pure, too good, to foul and pollute by plunging her into a life of degradation.

Yet, on the other hand, was marriage indispensable—for the present, at least? How many loved and remained true for years, though precluded by various causes from becoming man and wife! Surely they were happy in each other's society and contented with their lot in life. They pined not after impossibilities. They mourned not, neither did they weep, after the unattainable.

Why could not Azzahra and he meet and love on this footing? He would ever remain near her and be true to her; he would ever be happy gazing on her, holding sweet converse with her, fondly telling her of his undying love. Why become estranged for life, though they should not become united for life? Why tear himself away? Why break his heart? Why sound the knell of his doom?

Such were the vain, incoherent, conflicting meditations that tortured Henry's bewildered brain. He saw not the folly, the impracticability,

of such an insane visionary project. He saw not that in the cases he had cited as precedents both parties were aware that immediate union was impossible, though they sought it carefully with tears; consequently they were contented to submit to their hard lot by mutual consent, hoping for happier days when they might confirm their vows at the altar.

Were he and Azzahra placed in a similar position? Well he knew to the contrary. Well he knew that with him alone it would rest, when the time for action came, to take her to his arms and make her his own for ever. No insurmountable barrier stood in the way—no difficulty even, save such as he chose to create. For could Azzahra's willingness be doubted to fly with him and become his bride?

Had he given the subject due reflection, he would have seen the cruelty as well as the futility of making such a heartless coldblooded proposal to the confiding being who so passionately adored him.

Still, ponder and waver and plan as he might, struggle as he might to shake off the trammels, to escape out of the net, his passion burned as fervidly as ever, and only needed a glimpse of the treasured object to fan it once more into a devouring flame. Should Fate cause them to meet again, he would blindly succumb a helpless slave at her feet. Reason, notwithstanding, was

beginning at times to gain dominion over him, and to bring before his eyes the grave consequences that this entangling attachment might entail. In short, he began to doubt: not to doubt the goodness, the worth, the loveliness of Azzahra—not to doubt his love for her; but to doubt the wisdom of taking the final irrevocable plunge—the wisdom of giving way to his intoxicating desire to follow after her still, were that plunge not to be taken.

He despised and abhorred himself for entertaining these disloyal, unknightly doubts. Still the doubts he felt, and they could not be repressed. They grew moreover from day to day, and he knew that they continued to grow.

Fresh incentives to doubt were ever arising. Olinda, to whose judgment he could not but attach weight, though he had at times so warmly resented her interference, vehemently discountenanced his design. The American, likewise, had unhesitatingly condemned mixed marriages between Europeans and natives; and did not Edwardes, by his denunciations of Azzahra's father, show clearly that he was of the same way of thinking? All this shook his faith. He could not shut his eyes to the suspicion that any person he consulted would advise him against such a step—advise him never to see her more—and could it be that they were right? Could Olinda have spoken truly when she declared

that absence, far from making fonder, tends rather to cool and chill the lover's heart? Could his heart be turning cold and chill? Oh, never!—impossible! Forget his Azzahra, his prized Azzahra? Away with such traitorous thoughts!

How fortunate that love is blind! How much he escapes seeing that 'twere better not to see! And Henry was blind. He could dimly distinguish dark indistinct shadows of evil flit past, but he was unable to see them aright, or to clothe them in living forms. While he gazed they vanished from his sight. His understanding was clouded and darkened, so that he could not read the truth. He was changing—changing in resolve to sacrifice all for love—and he knew it not.

Soon was he to gaze again on Azzahra, however, and to have his love rekindled as bright as ever.

His reverie, which, it must be owned, failed significantly to produce any definite or practical conclusion, was brought to a close by the adjournment of the party from the dining-room to the terrace.

Olinda proposed that they should have music, and commenced by singing the following ballad, to the accompaniment of her guitar :

MY OWN, MY NATIVE SHORE.

I.

When Nature beams with life again,
When winter winds have blown away,
Before the cloudless azure sky
That glows beneath the smile of day ;

When verdure decks anew the plain,
And when the swallow comes once more,
Oh ! how my heart with fondness sighs,
To see my own, my native shore !

II.

I love the changing scenes of life,
I love through many lands to roam,
I love to hear the din of war,
I love to see the ocean foam.
But yet, when far from those I love,
The friends I may behold no more,
With none to love me, how I pine
To see my own, my native shore !

III.

One true and tender heart is there,
A maid who loves me as her life,
She sighs to win me to her side,
To lure me from the ways of strife.
The summer sun, when she is mine,
Will shine above for evermore ;
I must away to claim my bride
Upon my own, my native shore.

When Olinda had finished she handed the guitar to Edwardes, requesting that he would favour them with a song.

“It will give me much pleasure to comply with your wishes, Miss Somerton,” he said ; “ but may I ask how you know I play and sing ? That is a mystery I cannot solve, for no one has heard me do one or the other since I have come to Algiers.”

“Your secrets are all known to me,” she replied, laughing. “Don’t you remember how amazed you were during our sail to Rusgunia

at my saying I knew you were an archæologist?"

"Indeed, I well remember my astonishment," he said in response; "but you discovered my *spécialité* by overhearing me mention the fact myself, whereas it is very clear you never could have heard me sing."

"I only suspected you were musical, and I find I was right," she gaily added; "but I certainly never heard you sing, nor heard you did sing. However, that is a pleasure to come, and I am delighted to see it is so near at hand."

"You are exceedingly kind to say so," he answered, politely bowing, "and I trust my efforts to please may justify your favourable anticipations."

Accompanying himself, he then sang, in a rich baritone voice :

I FEEL THAT WE SHALL MEET AGAIN.

I.

The happy days that we have passed
Have never faded from my mind ;
The memory of those sunny hours
Is all the joy I now can find.
Oh ! did I feel we ne'er should meet
Upon this dreary world again,
My weeping eyes would fill with tears,
My aching heart would break with pain.

II.

But oh ! I feel that we shall meet,
Though after many days have flown,
I feel that those who love so well
Cannot be doomed to pine alone.

Then, dearest, say you will be mine
For ever, when we meet again ;
Bid not mine eyes to fill with tears,
My aching heart to break with pain.

“Was not that pretty ballad Miss Somerton sang one of her own composition?” asked Edwardes, turning to Henry, when he had finished.

“You are right in your surmise,” Henry replied. “It is one of my greatest favourites, and I hope my cousin will favour us with another.”

“Do, pray, Miss Somerton,” Edwardes urged. “If all the songs you compose are as charming as the last, I could gladly listen to your strains all day.”

This flattering compliment gave great pleasure to Olinda, made manifest in the flesh by the smile on her lip and the blush on her cheek. After tendering her thanks for his favourable opinion, she struck two or three chords on the guitar to find the right key, and sang :

THE FADED ROSE.

I.

“Oh ! dearest, give to me that rose,
Plucked by thine hand from off the tree ;
To me so sweet no flower that blows
As one that hath been touched by thee.
Next to my heart it shall abide
While I am wedded as thy bride.”

II.

“Nay, dearest love! Behold, its bloom
Is faded by the burning sun,
Befitting emblem of the doom
That waits us when our race is run.
Such mournful emblem ne’er shall be,
Beloved one, my gift to thee.”

III.

“Meeter this bursting bud just born
Beneath the warm sun’s genial kiss ;
It tells us of the brightening morn
That dawns upon our life of bliss.
Then let it next thine heart abide
While thou art wedded as my bride.”

“Delightful, Miss Somerton!” rapturously exclaimed Edwardes.

“Now, Mr. Edwardes,” pleaded Olinda, smiling, “you must kindly favour us with another song ; I have contributed two, while you have favoured us with but one.”

Thus appealed to, their guest sang :

MY MOUNTAIN HOME.

I.

Where the witching notes are heard
Of the rapture-breathing bird,
Where the torrents gush and foam,
Give me there my mountain home.

II.

Where in lonely pride on high,
Relics of an age gone by,
From the ruined tower and dome,
Give me there my mountain home.

III.

Where the darkling pine-groves throw
Shadows on the gorge below,
Haunted by wild sprite and gnome,
Give me there my mountain home.

IV.

Where the wildest summits rise,
Half obscured amid the skies,
Where the chamois fearless roam,
Give me there my mountain home.

“I am so glad, Miss Somerton, you do not affect dry learned music,” observed Edwardes. “It is such a fatal mistake to introduce it in private, especially when a large mixed company are present. These heavy compositions only bore, except in homœopathic doses, in spite of the dissemblings and the professions of wondering enjoyment on the part of the victimised audience.”

“I agree with you,” Olinda replied. “Whenever I make up my mind to go and sit out a long programme of severe classical music, I feel as though I were about to attend a learned dissertation on Troglodytes or Megalosaurians—highly instructive and interesting, but not amusing, except to the initiated. Some of these musical compositions, introduced occasionally amongst others, for the sake of making variety, I always like to hear.”

“Just my feeling,” he said. “The science of music is clearly intended to entertain and please,

not merely to astonish by brilliant instrumentation and unmelodious noisy effects."

"Precisely what my cousin and I have so often said," exclaimed Olinda. "Is it not, Henry?"

"It is indeed," Wilton replied. "I plead guilty to liking my music flavoured with a little dash of air and melody—in short, with some feeling."

"Aunt Alice sings divinely," ejaculated Geraldine, addressing Edwardes with a mischievous leer.

"Indeed?" he said, looking dubiously at the antiquated lady.

"She does, I assure you," continued the child in her insinuating, coaxing, merry way. "Do please ask her for a song."

"How can you be so naughty, Geraldine, as to tease your aunt?" interposed Olinda, not wishing to see the worthy woman made a subject of merriment. "You know she never sings before strangers."

"Not in general," sighed Miss Thornton, bashfully casting down her eyes; "but I shall have much pleasure in obliging Mr. Edwardes."

"You will oblige me greatly, I assure you," he replied, with a polite bow that deeply touched her heart.

She then began, in a somewhat cracked and tremulous voice :

THE LOST LOVER.

I.

Once a glorious youth I loved.
True and good he ever proved ;
All my maiden heart I gave,
Cupid owned me for a slave.
 Broken hearts and weeping eyes !
 In the cold, cold grave he lies.
 All his pride and beauty fled,
 He is numbered with the dead !

II.

Even Antinoüs the fair,
Adonis with the golden hair,
And Phoebus, god of day and light,
Were not so comely nor so bright.
 Broken hearts and weeping eyes !
 In the cold, cold grave he lies.
 All his pride and beauty fled,
 He is numbered with the dead !

III.

Oh ! what loveliness and grace
Shone upon his manly face !
Through the world I fain would follow
The superb divine Apollo.
 Broken hearts and weeping eyes !
 In the cold, cold grave he lies.
 All his pride and beauty fled,
 He is numbered with the dead !

General applause followed Miss Thornton's performance, that lady herself appearing strongly inclined to burst into tears, so deeply was she touched by the theme. Frederick and Geraldine, however, continued their cheering so long, and indulged in such peals of merry laughter, that Olinda became annoyed, and gave them a look which soon stopped their hilarity.

CHAPTER X.

TRACKED AGAIN.

AFTER leaving Staouéli the Villa Isly party started for Sidi-Ferruch. Passing through Cheraga, the *cocher* stopped at the gendarmerie station to deliver a message from the police at Staouéli relative to the pretended mendicants, on whose movements, should they pass through the village, a close watch was to be kept.

When Olinda heard what the driver was saying she expressed her concurrence in the belief that these people were assuming feigned characters. She related how she had offered money to the young woman through a feeling of compassionate sympathy for her apparent poverty and inability to endure the fatigues of travel—an offer rejected by the seeming pauper with contemptuous scorn. The gendarme carefully noted down this evidence, which he considered conclusive confirmation of the opinion held by his comrade at the Abbey.

“Did not the party consist of an elderly Arab,

a young woman apparently his daughter, and a Negress?" inquired the man.

"The same," Olinda answered; "and there was a greyhound along with them covered with scars."

"Just the description I have been sent," the gendarme replied. "These marks on the dog are strong additional evidence of the real position of these wanderers, for they have been inflicted while hunting the wild-boar—not a likely way for a penniless beggar to use his dog. I shall keep on the lookout, and doubtless we shall have them here ere long."

While this colloquy continued Wilton's uneasiness and anxiety became intense, for he instantly perceived how the matter stood, and knew it was Azzahra against whom his cousin was so bitterly hostile. Several times he tried to check her animosity, but she would take no heed, nor listen to his attempts at persuasion. At length he lost patience, for he was veering round already to the old feeling of love now that Azzahra was again beset by dangerous troubles, and he angrily chided Olinda for such meddlesome interference in what concerned her not.

"What can it matter to you," exclaimed he, "who or what these people may be?"

"It matters very much," she answered somewhat snappishly. "That impudent young thing

insulted me grossly for offering to do her an act of kindness, and it is quite right that she should receive a lesson in good manners. Trying to confer favours on such lowly creatures is like casting pearls before swine; they only turn and rend you. But she will know better next time than to repulse a lady in such a coarse rude manner when condescending to address her."

"So like you women!" Henry replied—"always on the lookout for some petty triumph, or some petty revenge for an imaginary grievance!"

"It is no imaginary grievance, I can assure you," interrupted Olinda. "The conduct of a foully attired vagrant spurning me with the air of a queen was unjustifiable, and a severe humbling would do her great good."

"Rest assured, Olinda, she does not belong to the humble class you imagine," he urged, controlling his anger.

"That is just what the gendarmerie say," she continued, "and doubtless they are right. Impostors like these, in all probability rebels and traitors at heart, ought to be mercilessly put down with the strong hand of authority."

"Why stamp you them as rebels and traitors?" asked Wilton, outwardly protesting against this invidious description, although aware at heart how true it was, at least so far as Selim

Mustapha was concerned. "Did the girl bear the appearance of such?"

"She did not, I must own in candour," his cousin answered; "she was one of the most lovely graceful creatures I ever beheld. Moreover she appeared thoroughly amiable and good. In fact I confess she excited in me a warm interest, in spite of her beggar's dress, until she treated me with such gross and unwarrantable impertinence."

"And would not you feel aggrieved were you offered charity, especially by a stranger?" he inquired.

"Of course I should," was the reply; "but that is not a parallel case."

"How know you that?" he followed up; "she may be as wealthy and as haughty in spirit as yourself."

"As to haughtiness, she is as proud as Lucifer," said Olinda; "but her wealth I should gravely doubt."

Strange that Wilton's violent incoherent partisanship of these seeming mendicants should not have revealed the truth to Olinda that it was his Arab of whom they were speaking. The girl she could see occupied a higher social position than was indicated by her outward appearance; she perceived her cousin warmly espoused her cause, even to the extent of sharply reproving herself; she saw his despondent frame of mind at hearing her hunted down. Yet the sorry plight in which

Azzahra appeared disarmed suspicion that Henry's championship of her cause had any significance beyond defending a woman in distress whom he thought unjustly persecuted.

Her brother Frederick, however, took in the whole situation at a glance when he heard the description of the mendicants. Well he remembered the scene in the Sahel when Wilton endeavoured to carry off this same girl into the thicket until stopped by the Soudanese. But prudence prevented his passing any comment. On that occasion he had wisely kept his counsel, and he determined to do so now again.

Down into the valley they sped through far-spreading tangled mazes of lentisk, pine, palmetto, wild olive, laurestinas, myrtle, gigantic heather, and arbutus; and they passed wagon-loads of this indigenous *broussaille*, which the French settlers were felling and transporting for firewood to the city.

The morning breeze blew fresh and exhilarating, and all shone bright. But the scenes through which they passed brought no enjoyment to the heart of Henry Wilton, whose thoughts were wholly wrapped up in the dangers that seemed to surround on every side his unfortunate Azzahra.

Clearly she had contrived to escape by unaccountable good fortune from the meshes of the mock Spaniard who was haunting their steps

at the Sahel. Now again the emissaries of the Government were on her track, assisted and encouraged by his own cousin. Why should Olinda, he reflected angrily, volunteer thus in driving to despair unfortunate victims who had never done her wrong? How paltry and contemptible to allow petty private pique against the poor wayfarer for incautiously showing a high and proud spirit to carry her away and induce her to hound on the tormentors! It was unworthy of one who ought to soar high above these little jealousies. Scarce could he have believed that Olinda, with her lofty noble nature, would descend to base narrow-minded revenge like this, and trample ruthlessly on a weak, helpless, and unoffending sister in such coldblooded heartlessness!

Did he know how the mock Spaniard had been silenced, how barbarously he had been butchered—did he know that Azzahra, so gentle and feminine to outward appearance, was cognisant of all the circumstances attending the foul murder, and that she continued to associate on terms of apparent affection with the assassin—what a rude shock his faith and love would have received! Of a surety he would have banished her for ever from his thoughts as a tainted accursed outcast.

Now that she was struggling in difficulties and trouble, his unreasoning faith and his wild

love grew stronger than ever. He pined to be at her side, and to lend the aid of his strong arm for protection. Bitterly he sighed at reflecting that he must have been close to her at Staouéli without the opportunity of speaking one word, of even catching a passing glance.

Little he suspected how near he had really been, or that it was Azzahra's prudent and ready forethought in rapidly veiling and turning away Kredoudja's face that probably prevented the recurrence of another painful scene such as took place the day of his visit at her house in Algiers. Strange that he failed to recognise either Selim Mustapha or the greyhound Karakouch outside the gates of the Abbey, both of whom he had passed. He was engaged describing to Olinda the interior of the conventual buildings he had just gone through, and failed to note what occurred around.

A long drive through a large pine forest and they were at Sidi-Ferruch. After the party had visited the spot where the French effected their landing, Henry took Frederick for a walk along the dunes by the shore, for he felt sore against his cousin for her wanton uncalled-for malevolence, and cared not to remain in her society until his angry feelings had somewhat subsided.

He suspected not that his companion had truly guessed who were the subjects of Olinda's denunciations. After they had gone some

distance in silence he broke out in severe censure for the cruelty she had practised in setting the gendarmes after these unlucky people.

"What business was it of hers," he added, "that she must needs meddle and interfere?"

"Of course you know who the lot are?" Frederick said, looking hard at his cousin.

"How should I know?" replied Wilton evasively. "Whoever they may be, Olinda had no right to hunt them down in the way she did."

But Frederick was not to be put off so easily by this diplomatic manœuvre, and determined to discover whether Wilton still felt the same romantic affection for the wandering Arab.

"This is the native girl you so nearly took off through the coppice of the Sahel," he continued; "and I believe you would have carried your point too, only her black attendant ran up to stop you."

"Would that I had succeeded!" Wilton sadly exclaimed; "what trials and heartburnings would have been spared us both!"

"It would have been the story of the white elephant over again," Frederick went on in his heedless unreflecting manner, unsuspecting of the deep wounds he was mercilessly inflicting. "When you had got her you would not know what on earth to do with her. Depend on it,

Henry, by this time you would have heartily repented of your bargain!"

From any one else Wilton would not have tolerated such freedom of speech. But he liked his cousin, and allowed him to make what comments he pleased without reproof.

Anxiously he pondered, however, over Frederick's words, and took them seriously to heart. Here was a fresh monitor rising up in judgment, joining in the hue-and-cry against him, and denouncing his visionary schemes with as great warmth as his seniors. The humiliation he felt keenly of being lectured and taken to task by such a mere youth, whose interference amazed and irritated him, and he took a speedy opportunity of turning the conversation to a more congenial subject.

On their return Olinda read them a severe lecture for their ungallant behaviour in remaining absent so long, which sounded strangely misplaced in Henry's ear, seeing that his object in absenting himself was to escape for a time from her company. Unconscious, however, of the humiliating fact, she related with a slight *souffçon* of triumph how agreeably the time had passed while they were away, in the company of a colonist who had invited them into his pretty villa close at hand, and shown them through his pleasure-grounds.

Much to her surprise, this man, although

inhabiting such a retired spot, proved to be an accomplished artist, who had taken excellent sketches of Bou-Zareah, the Pass of the Iron Gates, the Cedar Forests at Teniet-el-Hâad and in the Djurjura Mountains, the Gorge of the Chiffa, the cliffs and waterfalls around the City of Constantine, the Falls of the Saf-Saf at El-Ourit and the Medersa at Tlemcen, the Oases of the Desert, El-Kantra or the Gate of the Sahara, and many other picturesque scenes of interest throughout the three provinces of Algeria.

Olinda expressed great admiration for Monsieur Martin's choice collection of water-colour drawings, all the subjects being fresh and unknown to fame, selected by the eye of an artist, and worked up with skill and care. In short, she was charmed with the accomplishments and conversation of her new friend, and told Wilton how much he had lost in missing the opportunity of making the gentleman's acquaintance.

"Is it not lamentable," she exclaimed, "to find a man of his superior intellect buried in this dreary remote corner—no soul to converse with save the solitary gunner in charge of the fort, or the proprietor of that petty *auberge*?"

"Sidi-Ferruch is not a lively spot, undoubtedly," Wilton replied; "but the man clearly took up his abode of his own freewill, so how can he deserve our sympathy or compassion?"

“He is very much to be pitied,” she said, correcting her cousin. “He has fallen a victim to gross misgovernment, through which his plans have been thwarted and his prospects ruined.”

She proceeded to narrate how Monsieur Martin had settled at Sidi-Ferruch solely for the purpose of the sardine fishery, the adjoining waters abounding with these fish. After fitting out fishing-boats, building residences for his fishermen and their families, and fairly starting the undertaking, great was his vexation to discover that he could get no purchaser in the Marseilles market, unless at a ruinous sacrifice, owing to the high differential duty imposed by the Government to protect French interests in the mother-country.

“Is it surprising to find,” she added, “that Algeria fails to thrive as a colony when it is treated by the Home Government on the same footing as a foreign nation?”

“That is true enough,” Henry answered. “Such policy is suicidal. At the same time your friend should have made proper inquiries before sinking his capital in what he ought to have known must prove a disastrous failure.”

“Misfortune always pursues those who are blessed with talent,” she continued; “they seem to be invariably misunderstood and unappreciated.”

“That is a conclusion in which I cannot

concur," responded Wilton. "Genius, as a rule, makes opportunities, and forces itself to the front. Should your theory, however, be correct, talent can scarcely be a blessing. If always coupled with misfortune, its absence ought rather to be reckoned an advantage."

Olinda inwardly chafed with annoyance at her cousin's logic, because she knew it was unanswerable, though sorely militating against her favourite theories. But her cherished opinion as to talent being so often crushed and ignored she held by with unreasoning though unswerving tenacity; for many cases had come to her own knowledge where the greatest merit failed to rise above the surface, failed to make the faintest mark, failed to obtain one gleam of the sunshine of success. The hapless victim to the ignorance and coldheartedness of the cruel world, as she held, had lain down to perish of disappointment and despair. For such her heart bled. But she reasoned not what happiness might have been theirs had these victims not nurtured aspirations they were unable to realise, had they not seen visions and dreamed dreams ever destined to fade away into obscurity.

On their return through the village of Cheraga, Wilton anxiously looked out for traces of the denounced wanderers. Soon, while they passed through the street of the village, he observed Kredoudja seated outside the door of a *café*

maure. Instantly he knew her, and he could perceive she recognised him likewise, for she endeavoured to conceal her features. Had he been alone, what a blessed opportunity to seek tidings of his lost love, perhaps even to snatch a few moments' stolen interview! Now he was forced to pass by, as though they were nothing to each other. His fear was that Olinda, as well as himself, might chance to recognise Kredoudja and Karakouch, who lay close by, and inform the officials; but she chanced to look the other way, and paid no heed.

Henry dreaded that Azzahra could not possibly escape now from the surveillance of the gendarmes, and he trembled to reflect on the consequences that might ensue.

CHAPTER XI.

SCENES BY THE WAY.

PASSING the cemetery of cromlechs, and keeping away from the highroads along bypaths over wild hills covered with dense masses of yellow cytissus, and with gigantic white heather standing upwards of six feet high, Selim Mustapha and his two companions continued to pursue their weary course.

To Azzahra, who from childhood had fondly cherished flowers, this luxuriant wealth of rich blossom gave great pleasure. She found, moreover, the soft elastic hillsides far less wearisome to her tender feet than the hard dusty roads over which she had journeyed so long.

As they approached Cheraga the face of the country changed. The yellow genista and the white erica, so pleasing in Azzahra's eyes, gave place to rich cornfields, vineyards, fields of sweet-scented geranium, and emerald-green pastures, belonging to thriving European colonists. On the arrival of the French vast

unbroken downs stretched over this part of the country, vestiges of which still remain, and they had been frequented from time immemorial by native shepherds with their flocks and herds.

The cultivation that prevailed in every direction prevented our travellers from longer keeping to secluded ways of safety without trespassing on the farms of the settlers. Wherefore they were forced to seek the highway once more, the dangers they might incur there appearing a lesser evil than being drawn into a quarrel with some arrogant landed proprietor about crossing his grounds, the result of which might be to have the gendarmes put upon their track.

A smiling thriving settlement met their eyes at Cheraga, rich in corn-mills, perfume distilleries, and oil-mills. The entrance to the village lies between aloe, cactus, and myrtle hedges, large weeping-willows and olive-trees throwing their shade on the sultry road beneath. Through their spreading boughs lovely views are caught of the deep bay stretching away from the Point of Sidi-Ferruch to the Djebel Chenoua, whose shore is dotted with the prettily situated colonies of Fouka, Bon Ismaël, Castiglione, and Tipasa, the grand old Koumba-er-Roumia towering above all on its lofty sea-laved hill.

Selim Mustapha pointed out to his child, with shame and bitter hate, where another battle had

been fought, in which his countrymen were ignominiously routed by the invading hordes of the Christians.

“The foul sons of carrion!” he fiercely exclaimed, smiting on his breast. “Would that they had all been surprised and massacred, even as were the whole battalion at the Bivac des Indigènes, every man of whom our brave warriors slaughtered while they rested unsuspectingly by the wayside, lulled into false security!”

Azzahra could not refrain from contemplating with horror the system of butchering unfortunate men in cold blood, without giving them a chance of self-defence; but she held her peace, for she remembered the death of the spy, and trembled to make allusion before her father to such dangerous subjects. Far from seeing cause for boastful exultation in the cruel slaughter of the unhappy French soldiers, she compassionated them for falling victims to the folly and incapacity of their commander, who had failed to keep a proper lookout for danger.

These bloodthirsty ebullitions of fury on the part of her parent awoke afresh her recollection and her abhorrence of his foul crime, and renewed her growing aversion to his presence. It humiliated her too that Kredoudja had overheard these murderous denunciations, although,

after the palliating arguments Kredoudja had employed in her master's favour the night the French police agent was so barbarously slain, she knew that the Negress did not regard the assassination of a Christian with the same repugnance as herself.

She pondered anew over the tangled mass of crime and misfortune that beset and closed her in on every side, from which she would so thankfully escape, that she might fly away and be at rest. She pondered over the fleeting glimpse she had caught at Staouéli of him she loved so well. The deliverer had been at hand, but she dared not make herself known, far less fly to his side, in the presence of an angry father ready to pursue her to the death.

By this time they had entered Cheraga, where Selim Mustapha sought the friendly shelter of a *café maure* to obtain refreshment.

Taking advantage of her father's absence with the Quahouadji, Azzahra confided to the Soudanese the reason why she had covered her own face so suddenly with her yashmak at Staouéli, and why she had so peremptorily turned the Black round and led her away. The astonishment of the faithful attendant was great. All day she had desired to inquire the cause from her mistress, but could find no opportunity for speaking in private; and before her master she shrank from asking questions, for she could per-

ceive that some mystery existed which to him must not be revealed.

The prudence and self-control of her mistress she warmly commended, for what dire misfortunes must have ensued were Azzahra discovered exchanging signs, or even looks, with the Christian! The indignation of Selim Mustapha would have known no bounds.

And that some unwise heedless demonstration would have followed a mutual recognition she felt well assured, for the scene on the housetop in Algiers remained indelibly impressed on her mind. The still greater danger of her mistress rushing to seek the protection of the Christian Kredoudja suspected not; for Azzahra carefully locked in her breast the secret that such a wild mad project had even for a moment entered into her thoughts, to brood and sorrow alone over the enforced abandonment of this last hope for emancipation.

"You are right, Kredoudja. It is better thus," sighed Azzahra, commencing to weep afresh. "Even had I suffered him to recognise me, he dared not have spoken, dared not have noticed me, far less have striven to bear me away while my father stood close at hand."

"And while those Europeans stood close at hand," shrewdly added the serving-girl, who forgot not the lowly garb in which her mistress was attired.

“Ah! Kredoudja, you awaken sad reflections,” piteously moaned Azzahra, who, however, failed to catch the point of her waiting-woman’s remark. “You strike a painful chord. Did you see the fair daughter of Europe address me outside the gates of the Monastery?”

“In shame I noticed that she dared to offer you alms, which you rightly rejected with scorn,” the faithful Black answered, who regarded those she served with reverent admiration. “Nobly you upheld the honour of yourself and your father’s house by the indignant pride with which you repelled the presumption of this insolent European!”

“Ah! Kredoudja, it was no presumption,” sorrowfully interrupted Azzahra. “She meant well, and wished to do me service. It was presumption in me to reply as I did. We are in no position, thus meanly clad, to assume independence of demeanour. No sooner had I rebuffed the lady for an act dictated by kind feelings of philanthropy than my conscience smote me for the inconsiderate rudeness; and I perceived, moreover, of what imprudence I had been guilty by refusing charity with such haughtiness while presenting this humble appearance. Had the gendarme arrived on the scene but a few minutes earlier, and witnessed my behaviour, his worst suspicions

would have received strong confirmation. What dread disasters might then have befallen !”

Kredoudja owned the truth of this, and that Azzahra, in her assumed character, should have abstained from such unreflecting demonstrations of scornful pride.

“Allah be praised ! all has ended well,” she added, “for this thoughtlessness has brought no calamity upon our heads. So the recollection, my dear lady, need trouble you no more.”

“Let us trust no evil result may ensue,” Azzahra thoughtfully replied, to the surprise of the Soudanese, who failed to comprehend what ill could possibly arise now that the matter appeared to have passed away and to be set at rest.

“You told me that what I said about the Christians awoke sad reflections,” resumed Kredoudja, whose curiosity was excited to discover what had happened. “Has any fresh calamity befallen you, my darling mistress, to add to your sorrows, already so hard to bear ?”

“Alas ! the most grievous of all,” sobbed the wretched girl. “That beautiful Christian who offered me charity is the fair woman that the fortune-teller you brought said would cross my path. Kredoudja,” she continued, taking the hand of the Black in hers and looking in her attendant’s face with tearful eyes, “she is crossing my path now.”

"Calm yourself, dear lady!" soothingly pleaded Kredoudja. "Such harm shall not come nigh you."

But though so earnest in offering consolation, her heart believed not what her lips spake. In the omniscience of the magician she reposed unhesitating credence, which led her to concur in secret with Azzahra's belief that the stranger was already conspiring against her—that she was insidiously seizing the opportunity Wilton's presence afforded to captivate him and win his heart.

"My eyes saw it, Kredoudja," mournfully argued Azzahra. "You dared not look. I would not suffer you, so much I feared my beloved Christian might remember your features, and a second time commit some unguarded act. My face being concealed, I cast back many anxious glances ere he vanished out of sight as we left the spot. Each time I beheld him and that dreadful European engaged in deep and earnest converse. When last I looked she had linked her arm within his, and was looking up tenderly in his face."

"But that is the habit of the Franks," Kredoudja soothingly interrupted. "You know they always promenade in this fashion about Algiers, the men and women arm-in-arm."

Though employing such arguments to assuage the grief of Azzahra, no doubt remained in

Kredoudja's mind, after what she heard, that they had indeed beheld the dangerous woman denounced by the chiromancer—a conviction that tended to enhance her profound respect for the mystical power of palmistry.

For Azzahra she felt profound compassion by reason of these wicked machinations against her—machinations with which she was powerless to cope, and which seemed destined to swallow her up in the depths of despair.

Still it consoled her to reflect how far better it would be for Azzahra that her lover should wed one of his own creed and people, so as to be for ever debarred from following in her steps, which could only lead to ruin and despair; for the Soudanese shrewdly doubted whether the Christian entertained serious intentions of marriage, however devoted and earnest might be his love. Bitterly she deplored the present unhappiness she witnessed, but she learned on reflection to look with less disfavour at the eventual results it seemed likely to produce.

From her mistress, however, she kept these prudent reflections hidden, for she knew, with the quick perception of her race in affairs of the heart, how futile argument proves where passion sways the soul.

“Yet the sorceress promised I should triumph,” mused Azzahra to her confidante. “Though that lovely Christian may strive to

supplant me, she will of a surety fail. The heart of my own love will ever remain loyal and true; this I firmly believe with all my heart and soul."

"Who could doubt the power of the sooth-sayer?" the other replied evasively, with an affectation of confidence she was very far from feeling in this instance, or indeed wishing to feel, notwithstanding her usual blind implicit faith in supernatural revelation.

Overcome by fatigue and exhaustion, Azzahra sank down on a couch to snatch a few moments' repose, while her waiting-maid took a seat beneath a shady willow outside the door of the house. She had not long remained there when she recognised Wilton and the fair lady among the occupants of a carriage that hurried rapidly past, and had scarcely time to lift her burnous in front of her face so as to try and avoid being seen by Wilton. As they swept by she took notice that the party were engaged in animated conversation, apparently discussing some matter of importance.

Little she suspected how intimately connected was this argument with the affairs of those she loved.

Knowing how dear to the lover's heart is even the faintest intelligence of the one they cherish, she was on the point of running indoors to tell Azzahra; but reflection showed the inutility of

harrowing her mistress's feelings, when no good could come of learning that he had passed so close again without their meeting. So she resolved to forbear, and to keep silent.

Rapidly unforeseen events overruled her resolve.

When Selim Mustapha summoned his child to renew the journey, he found her so oppressed with weariness and sleep that he could scarce awake her. But, once aroused, she bravely asserted her ability and readiness to start afresh, and he led her forth with many expressions of pitying commiseration.

Great was his terror on beholding a gendarme at the door engaged in conversation with Kredoudja.

"Aha! I have found you at last," the man exclaimed in a swaggering blustering tone. "When I saw this Black I suspected I was on the right track. You are the man then who, in this pretended mendicant garb, is rich enough to squander your money in the purchase of luxuries at Staouéli. And you," he continued, turning towards Azzahra, "rudely insulted a lady for offering you alms, moved to compassion by your fragile appearance and by your seeming poverty."

"I swear by the Holy Prophet," pleaded Selim Mustapha, "that the price of the perfume I had but just received in charity!"

"What has that to do with the case?" interrupted the man angrily. "Were you as poor as you pretend you would have ample demands for all the money you could get without buying such extravagant rubbish."

"Alas! what would you have?" the Arab rejoined. "My child was faint and weak."

"Just so. That is the very point which strengthens our suspicions," the Frenchman went on. "Your child, I can see, is reared with tender care and unaccustomed to this life of hardship. It is clear you are all practising the grossest deception. Why did you repulse the lady for her intended kindness if you are in such miserable distress?" he asked of Azzahra, with a look of triumph at the searching question. "Beggars are not wont to act thus."

Azzahra remembered that the Staouéli gendarme had not been present when Olinda addressed her, and therefore could have furnished no information. She determined to give a bold denial to the whole statement, which she more than suspected was thrown out on chance as a feeler, little imagining that the accusation had been made by Olinda herself, transformed now into her deadly enemy.

"I refused no alms, nor did I give offence to any," she replied, with as much firmness as her abject fears would permit.

"This denial complicates the matter," he

proceeded, "and makes it wear a most serious complexion. You will be surprised to learn that my informant is the lady herself. She called at our bureau this morning to denounce your unwarrantable conduct, and to declare her belief that you are all a set of impostors. Just now her carriage stopped again, returning from Sidi-Ferruch, when she expressed her disappointment that you had not yet been tracked. A young man along with her strove hard both times to check her anger, but so bitter was she against you that his interference seemed but to exasperate her the more."

Kredoudja now knew what was the subject of the excited discussion she had witnessed in the carriage between Wilton and Olinda.

In spite of this conclusive evidence, Azzahra reiterated her assertions that the accusation was a calumny, and that the account given must refer to some other person.

"How can that be?" he replied. "The lady accurately described you, your father, this Sou-danese, and even this greyhound, mentioning the scars with which he is covered. Your father, moreover, owned this moment to getting the geranium-scent at the Abbey, which puts the question beyond doubt. Your making this purchase, so unsuitable to persons in your supposed condition of life, is the reason why we received instructions to watch your movements

while remaining in the village, under the belief that you are enacting assumed parts. This morning," he continued, "I should have done no more, allowing you to depart at your pleasure. But a despatch has just arrived from headquarters stating that one of our emissaries has been missing for some days, and ordering us to detain and keep under surveillance all suspicious characters. This man has been for years employed to watch and track natives who are under the supervision of the Bureau Arabe, especially a known rebel by name Selim Mustapha. The sudden disappearance of our colleague and the simultaneous departure of Selim Mustapha from his home have caused considerable anxiety and activity in our department, for foul play is suspected, but as yet all search and all inquiry have proved unavailing."

On hearing these crushing words Azzahra hastened to re-enter the house, followed by Kredoudja, for she dared not trust herself to pass longer through such a fiery ordeal.

"It has come at last!" gasped the wretched girl to her waiting-woman, burying her face in her hands and bursting into a paroxysm of bitter wailing. "We are lost!"

"Fear not, my darling lady!" soothingly observed the Soudanese. "Though such great perils encompass us, Allah will provide a way

of safety, and will not deliver us into the hands of these bloodthirsty Giaours !”

“Oh, Kredoudja, what mean you ?” nervously asked her mistress. “You surely desire not the murder of another victim ?”

“It will not be necessary to assassinate this man, believe me,” the other hurriedly replied, though in her heart she could see no other means of escape.

Azzahra failed to perceive the force of this remark, for she knew how keen-scented and deadly are the police in the pursuit of their prey. But she felt powerless to act for the prevention of a catastrophe, if come it must, and was forced to await patiently the progress of events.

“That terrible fair woman !” Azzahra recommenced, as she bewailed her hard fate. “With what bitter malignant hostility is she crossing my path and hunting me to death ! But for her cruel interference we should not now be placed in this grievous strait.”

The Black would gladly have offered words of comfort, but she felt so profoundly impressed with the truth of what her mistress said, and with the proved prophetic power of the medium, that she became awestruck and speechless. What wondrous fulfilment of the predictions uttered ! How this wicked European was confirming and justifying through her malevolent

persecution the solemn warnings of the sorceress!

"Such a cloud of doubt and suspicion surrounds you and yours," continued the gendarme to Selim Mustapha, "that you must proceed no farther until instructions are received from Algiers. Meantime keep quiet and make no attempt at escape, for the house will be well watched. You will only fail, and will plunge yourself deeper into the mire."

"Far be it from me to harbour such a thought," meekly observed Selim Mustapha. "Yet it seems hard to forbid our departure when there is no charge against us."

"On the morrow we shall know more on that subject," the Frenchman retorted, with a significant glance that froze his victim to the marrow.

This covert threat plunged Selim Mustapha into dismay when he came to think of the trap into which he had fallen; for his conscience smote him, and bared to view the sword of destruction suspended over his guilty head.

After his foe had departed he remained wrapped in anxious thought, but the longer he reflected the deeper became his despondency and bewilderment. To remain meant destruction. Fly he must—but how? How elude this man's cautious and deadly vigilance? To slay him seemed impracticable, for it was clearly his purpose to keep aloof from danger, watching

outside the house instead of inside, as did his foolish colleague on the Sahel. Besides, should he even get an opportunity of murdering his enemy in the café, the Quahouadji was not to be trusted, like the faithful Yakoub, with such a momentous secret. He might be the first to give information, thinking detection of the crime certain to follow, for in the centre of a populous village how make away with and secrete the dead? In bitter disappointment he was forced to exclude assassination—his favourite remedy for prying impertinence—from his calculations for defeating the plans of the enemy. The sole resource remaining was to steal away under cover of the night, and to the carrying out of this project he directed all his attention.

Though egress by the front of the café would be rendered impossible by the patrol of the gendarme, a chance still existed of creeping off by the back in the dark, and this he resolved to try at all hazards. .

Examining the means of exit in this direction, he repaired to the chamber occupied by Azzahra and the Black. As he drew nigh the door he overheard his child exclaim: "Amid these calamities and horrors, is it not sweet consolation, Kredoudja, to know that I am not forgotten. You heard how warmly he espoused my cause on both occasions, and withstood to the

face that dreaded fair woman, my implacable enemy." Fortunately for his daughter he had given no heed to the words of the gendarme when relating how Wilton had rebuked Olinda for volunteering such hostile denunciations, being wholly absorbed in the contemplation of what personally concerned himself. To him, therefore, her words were an incomprehensible mystery.

Much perplexed he entered the room to demand an explanation; but Kredoudja, with ready adroitness, darted forward to stop him. Pointing to Azzahra, she placed her finger on her lips and then on her forehead, to intimate that the mind of her mistress wandered, and that she must be left undisturbed.

The devoted father readily understood these signals, and placed implicit reliance on the truthfulness of what Kredoudja would have him believe, remembering the heavy mental and bodily trials through which his delicate child had passed. But he trusted that absolute rest during the remainder of the day would restore her strength, and enable her to recover from the shock her nervous system had sustained; wherefore he gave strict injunctions that on no account should she be disturbed, telling the Black it was possible they might have to arise in the night and journey far away.

When the door closed after him Azzahra

rushed to embrace her attendant in an outburst of fervent gratitude.

“How ever repay you, dear Kredoudja,” she fondly exclaimed, “for saving me by your wonderful presence of mind? What answer could I have given? What possible explanation could I have offered? I could but have held my peace, and suffered the mind of my father to remain filled with the gloomiest doubts and suspicions.”

The few seconds the Arab remained in his daughter's room gave him sufficient opportunity to take a hasty survey of how the window was situated, and showed what facilities it presented for escape, being but slightly elevated above the ground, and standing some distance away from the part of the house occupied by the Quahouadji and his family. Here their movements could not be observed, and here he resolved, should he perceive the slightest prospect of success, to make the desperate venture for regaining his freedom. His mind relieved from a heavy weight of fear and anxiety by forming this resolution, he passed the rest of the day in converse with his host, letting drop no hint of his intention, but anxiously awaiting until the hour of deliverance should arrive.

CHAPTER XII.

AT SEA.

THE genial African sun shone brightly through the balmy air on the morning fixed for the Atlanta to sail on her lengthened cruise.

At the Villa Isly the inmates were early afoot, preparing to hasten down to the harbour and get on board, Edwardes having impressed upon them the importance of an early start.

As they crossed the old slave-market, Geraldine shocked Miss Thornton by asking whether she would not like to have been a slave there in the time of the Turks.

"You know, Aunt Alice, you would have enjoyed beyond measure being sold to the Corsairs," the child continued, "and would have considered it a distinguished honour."

"For shame, child!" the old lady exclaimed with horror. "How can you say such dreadful things?"

"How I should have liked, aunt, to see you knocked down at auction!" exclaimed Frederick,

joining in the merriment. "Depend upon it, you would have fetched a high price."

This good-humoured badinage, which Miss Thornton really enjoyed at heart herself, because she saw that it amused others and made them happy, was interrupted by the arrival of the Marquis de St. Bertrand, who was on the way to make his excuses to Edwardes, and express his regret at being unable to accept his invitation to join the yachting party, as he could not get leave of absence from his regiment.

When they reached the Pêcherie Stairs, where the yacht's boat was in waiting, they perceived that the Atlanta was gaily dressed in her colours from stem to stern in honour of their arrival. The Marquis gallantly handed Olinda into the boat, and while they were rowing across the harbour he strove conspicuously to make himself agreeable, in every way paying her marked attention. His easy high-bred politeness found great favour in her sight, and she owned that she sincerely regretted he was not to form one of the party on board. Edwardes, it was true, she had always found an esteemed companion, but she had perception enough to understand that Raoul de St. Bertrand was vastly his superior in most respects.

Undoubtedly the gallant hussar possessed not the same amount of dry learning, nor perhaps the same depth of character, as did Edwardes ;

but he was infinitely more refined, more brilliant in conversation, more clever at repartee, gifted with more *esprit* and *savoir-faire*—in short, he was more of a lady's man. And where is the woman who loves not to flutter round a lady's man? Woman must, in spite of herself, sympathize with one who lays himself out to please, in the same way as a man must sympathize with a woman who lets it be seen that she takes pleasure in his society. Such is human nature, and human nature will ever carry the day, reason and preach who may.

Olinda felt drawn towards St. Bertrand because he devoted himself to her service and flattered her *amour-propre*. She argued rightly in deeming him clever, but his cleverness was superficial. She judged him too much by sight, and too little by reason.

Alas! when once exterior advantages fascinate and enslave, weak woman becomes reckless of consequences, flinging away reason to the winds. The victim of blind infatuation and unwisdom, she was weak enough, when apart, to express sorrow for the way she had spoken the last time they met, and for the cruel destiny she believed was overwhelming him.

“What a calamity for one of your tender and home-loving nature to be severed from the scenes you pine for!” she murmured. “What a snare and curse are riches, that thus forbid a

man to wed the object of his choice! What is to become of you, alas! I know not. Few women are blessed with an overabundance of this world's goods; most, like myself, possess but small fortunes."

This showed St. Bertrand that marriage was out of the question, so he prepared to steer on the opposite tack. But he dissembled, looking at her fondly.

"One there is," he ardently exclaimed, "for whom I would give up all the world, and brave the most abject penury! I would marry you, Olinda, though you possessed not a shilling!"

Olinda was deeply touched at such unmishtakable devotion, and allowed the hypocritical reprobate to seize her hand unobserved, and fondly press it in his. "I live in hope," he sighed; "I feel you are destined to be mine for ever!"

A considerable amount of swell running inside the harbour, there was some slight difficulty in boarding the yacht. This alarmed Miss Thornton no little, who again repeated the coquettish difficulties she raised about climbing out of the boat. Though Edwardes and the American were profuse in offers of assistance, she would not be comforted.

"Let Lion pull you up, Aunt Alice," exclaimed Frederick, in fits of mischievous laughter.

"How can he, my dear?" she asked, looking bewildered.

"These Pyrenean dogs and the St. Bernard are kept for the purpose of saving human life," he maliciously went on, scarcely able to restrain his merriment. "It is their special mission."

"The St. Bernard breed I know rescue travellers in the snow," she said, casting a glance of doubt at her tormentor.

"Perfectly right," Frederick answered. "Don't you know, though, how the dogs take the frozen travellers to a place of safety? Their instinct," he went on, seeing Miss Thornton's vague look of helplessness, "teaches these sagacious animals to turn their backs towards the exhausted snow-bound traveller and wag their tails in his face. He soon discovers the meaning of these pantomimic gestures, and seizing hold of the dogs' tails, who signify their satisfaction by loud barkings of joy, gets dragged to the house of refuge."

"How romantic!" exclaimed the poor dupe.

"Would you not like to be saved thus?" asked Frederick.

"Immensely," she replied. "It would be delicious."

"Look!" he continued, trying to appear grave, as Lion gave his great tail a sweeping wag over the side of the yacht. "The dog is making the sign. Quick—quick!"

Believing implicitly the truth of what Frederick told, the simple old woman caught the huge creature by the tail, giving it a hearty pull, which so enraged Lion and outraged his dignity that he turned angrily round and made a snap at her nose, where she stood in the boat beneath.

This unexpected movement so terrified her that in her agile attempts to save her nose from the dog's teeth her foot slipped, and she was nearly precipitated into the water between the boat and the yacht. All, however, promptly exerted themselves to save her, Frederick making himself especially conspicuous; for he was alarmed at the narrow escape she had from drowning through his heedless folly, or else being crushed in the water between the boat and the larger vessel, which the waves constantly struck together with considerable force.

"Lion does not know how to save life in the way you describe," remarked Edwardes good-humouredly, as he addressed himself to Frederick, though at heart much displeased with the boy's mischievous waywardness. "However, had your aunt by bad fortune tumbled into the sea, I am certain he would have jumped in after and dragged her out. I have great faith in the dog's life-saving powers.

"You have done well to come early," Edwardes continued, addressing his guests, after the excitement attendant on Miss Thornton's im-

mersion had subsided ; “for we shall have a long beat to Cherchel Harbour, which I hope to reach before night. This westerly wind is contrary, as you see, and it is blowing fresh, so we shall have to tack the whole way. But the Atlanta is good to beat up to windward, and will behave herself well, you may feel certain.

“Nuisance, this tacking ! is it not ?” he resumed after a few moments. “It is one of those misfortunes, though, to which we must submit with a good grace.”

“Oh, dear ! I hope there will be no danger ?” tremulously interposed Miss Thornton, filled with apprehension by Edwardes’s declaration that something was about to happen which would be a nuisance and a misfortune, for her ideas on nautical matters were extremely hazy.

“Danger, my good lady !—nothing of the sort,” Edwardes answered with a reassuring laugh. “You do not imagine I would take you out to sea if I believed there was the slightest danger. There is a good puff of wind blowing no doubt, but it is only a nice sailing breeze—just what we sailors like. Still, if any of you care not to come, I shall be most happy to defer the cruise until some other occasion.”

His guests, including even Miss Thornton, joined in deprecating such a change of plan, having set their hearts on the party of pleasure. Had the ladies known, however, the roughness

of the sea outside the Mole, they would have gladly availed themselves of their host's proposal.

"So we are not to have the pleasure of your company, I hear?" Edwardes said, turning to the Marquis de St. Bertrand. "It is a great disappointment, I assure you, for I fully expected you to have come."

"You are very kind," politely answered the Frenchman. "My Colonel unfortunately, will not give me leave, for I am likely to be sent at once to the west on duty, and the order may arrive at any moment for me to start. It is not by any means impossible that we may meet at Oran, if you remain there for any length of time, when I should be enchanted to escort you through the environs."

"Should this occur it will give me very sincere pleasure," replied Edwardes, "and I think I may answer for all my friends here feeling equal gratification at the meeting."

"Indeed you may with perfect safety," added Olinda with a graceful smile, welcome to the heart of St. Bertrand, who lifted his hat, and made her a low respectful parting obeisance in response.

"My fair lady, you are doomed!" he muttered in triumph, as he politely kissed her hand.

After St. Bertrand had been rowed ashore Edwardes gave orders for getting the Atlanta under

weigh. No sooner had the yacht rounded the pier-head and plunged into the open water outside than it became evident what a trying task she would have in working up to windward against the stiff breeze that was blowing and the heavy sea that was running. But all on board professed to be of good heart, beseeching Edwardes not to put back on their account, as they felt full reliance on his knowledge and judgment.

The Atlanta was an admirable steady sailer, shipping no seas, so the ladies were able to keep their seats on deck and admire the scenery as they went along the coast.

"You laughed at me the other day," said Edwardes, smiling and turning to Johnson, "about this being a dry boat, but you see now how valuable is such a property when ladies are on board. Were the Atlanta not a dry boat our fair friends would be driven down to the cabin, and we should lose the pleasure of their charming society."

"Well, that's just the truth," the American replied. "It is, no doubt, a considerable advantage; but I hope, all the same, that her cabins are not going to be as dry as her deck."

"Keep your mind easy on that score," said Edwardes. "We have spirits enough on board to make the fortunes of a dozen spiritualist mediums."

"Ay, and all good spirits too," the Yankee

rejoined, laughing. "No admission for any of your bad spirits here, I reckon."

Johnson expected that this harmless little sally of humour would prove a success, but Olinda joined not in the smiles it raised. It was not refined—it was not her style, and she cared not to conceal what she felt.

This was reprehensible; it was, moreover, in bad taste. One should ever strive to be considerate and kind towards those with whom one is brought in contact, endeavouring to promote their enjoyment, as well as to show that their endeavours to promote the enjoyment of others are appreciated. But Olinda, unluckily, had set up a higher standard of converse. She looked for talent, not levity. She yearned and pined after the ideal, while she despised the real. To her aught commonplace was unwelcome and even repulsive—a feeling it mattered not who knew she entertained. Yet never withal did she indulge in rudeness, nor give demonstrative proof of disapproval. She merely expressed absence of sympathy by cold unappreciative reserve and indifference.

Johnson, however, divined well enough what was passing in her mind, and it took some time to restore his equanimity, although bashfulness was far from being his most conspicuous quality.

Bravely the Atlanta dashed through the plashing waves, standing well out to sea. The first

tack brought her close up opposite St. Eugène, with its beautiful white marble Church of Notre-Dame d'Afrique sparkling in the sun, and with its tastefully laid out cemetery hanging on the hillside.

"What a number of Notre-Dames and Madonnas are to be met with over the world!" Olinda remarked. "Here is Notre-Dame d'Afrique; then we have Notre-Dame de bon Secour at Marseilles, Notre-Dame de la Mer, Notre-Dame de la Garde, Our Lady of the Grotto at Montserrat, Our Lady of Loretto, the Black Madonna in Spain, Notre-Dame des Poissons of the Greek Church, specially revered at Easter, and a host of others too numerous to mention."

"Yes, and the Donna del Lago," interposed Miss Thornton, proud to display her learning, and to be able to prompt her niece.

"And the Donna Immobile," added Frederick Somerton, convulsed with laughter.

"My dear aunt!" Olinda exclaimed in reply, kindly smiling amid the universal hilarity produced by the old lady's unfortunate remark, "that is the name of an Italian Opera. It means 'The Lady of the Lake,' so called after Scott's poem."

"Well, surely, there is the Madonna della Seggiola," Miss Thornton insisted, hoping to retrieve her lost reputation after making such a preposterous blunder.

"Oh, aunt dear! how can you say such absurd things!" gently interposed her niece. "You are thinking of Raphael's famous picture known by that name in the Pitti Palace."

"What a pity, Miss Thornton!" called out Johnson, highly entertained at his own play upon the word.

"It is very remarkable, as you say," observed Edwardes to Olinda thoughtfully, as he resumed the conversation which Miss Thornton had interrupted. "The number of Madonnas and Notre-Dames must be most perplexing to a person not versed in Christianity, who would naturally assume them all to be different individuals, instead of being only different impersonations of the same."

"The Greeks and Romans, in like manner, had various names for their heathen deities," added Olinda.

"Such was the case," he answered. "For instance, the Romans included a number of Jupiters in their mythology. There was Jupiter Ammon, a deity compounded of the Roman Jove and the Egyptian Ammon-ra. Then we meet with the Capitoline Jupiter, Jupiter Olympus, Jupiter Pluvius, Jupiter Fulgarator, Jupiter Tonans, Jupiter Fulminator, Jupiter Serenator, Jupiter Aethoüs, Jupiter Tarpeius, Jupiter Stator, and Jupiter Victor. Jupiter Fulminator was represented with a flint stone in his hand, in

place of the Thunderbolt, the flint being likewise the emblem of lightning. Treaties were ratified through swearing by this, 'The Stone of Jove.' He was called also *Lucesius*, or *Lucerius*, the same as *Lucifer*, by the Oscans and by the poet *Nævius*. *Falandus* was another of his names, 'falandum,' according to *Festus*, signifying heaven in the Etruscan language."

"What an enormous assemblage of Jupiters!" exclaimed *Olinda*, in astonishment at the number.

"Oh! there were a lot more Jupiters," continued *Edwardes*, laughing: "*Opitulus*, *Feretrius*, *Praedator*, *Triumphator*, *Latialis*, and *Lupinalis*. *Jupiter* was also designated as 'Prodigialis,' or the sender of prodigies by signs in the heavens and by the flight of birds; also as *Jupiter Hercius*, from his being the protector of property; and as *Jupiter Terminus*, through being the God of Boundaries."

"Wonderful array!" repeated *Olinda*.

"And yet were they all in reality one and the same *Jupiter*," he continued. "Take *Juno*, again. She was called *Lucina*, as *Jove* was called *Lucerius*, proving that they were the light-givers, or, in other words, the Sun and Moon, both names being derived from the same word—'lux,' the Latin for light. This goddess was also worshipped as *Juno Conciliatrix*, *Viriplaca*, *Virginalis*, *Matrona*, *Opigena*, *Sospita*, *Natalis*,

Moneta, Juga, Jugalis, Domiduca, Iterduca, Pronuba, Cinxia, Prena, Portenda, Fluonia, Curiatia, Cupra, and Popularia."

"Was she not supposed to be the same as the Greek Hera?" Olinda asked.

"Quite so," he replied. "Her worship was introduced from Greece into Rome, as was likewise that of Apollo, who occupied the same high position among the Grecian divinities that Jupiter did amongst those of Rome, being styled Father Apollo. He was also the Destroyer; the Delian Apollo, from having been born in the Island of Delos; Soter, the Saviour; Nomios, the god of the fields; Helios, the sun; Phœbus Apollo, Phoibos, and Apellon among the Greeks, and Horris among the Egyptians."

"Is he not also supposed to have been the Mithras of the Persians?" said Olinda.

"So it is believed," he answered; "but Greece was where he was in greatest repute, and there he was known under many denominations—such as the Pythian Apollo, from his having slain the Python when only four days old."

"He is also known as the Apollo Belvedere?" suggested Miss Thornton.

"He is indeed," broke in Johnson, glad to get an opportunity of edging in a word amidst such learned conversation. "I visited him often at

Florence. If you just go into his gallery you can see him there any day you like."

"Dear me! how can that be?" she feebly pleaded, looking bewildered. "Was he not a god?"

"Indeed he was," continued Johnson, "and a capital useful god too. You know he represented the Sun, and without the Sun how could we get on?"

"In the earlier heathen mythologies, as well as in those of Greece and Rome," said Olinda in continuation, and not heeding this time her aunt's preposterous interruption, "we meet with a similar custom of bestowing several appellations on the same deity. Thus Baal, Bel, Belal, and Belial are clearly different designations of the same divinity. So likewise in the case of Ammon-ra, the great god of the Egyptians; Amun, Ammun, Zeus Ammon among the Greeks, and Amon among the Hebrews, all doubtless refer to him. The Astarte and Ashtaroth of the Phœnicians and Sidonians, again, were evidently synonymous terms."

"Beyond all question," concurred Edwardes; "but *revenons à nos moutons*. To return, then, to the Roman mythology:—Venus was the Aphrodite Urania and the Aphrodite Pandemos of Greece. She was also the Latin Venus Cypria, Cypris, Cyprigenia, Cyprogene, Cythera, Cytherea, Cytheria, and, according to some authori-

ties, the Syrian Astarte and Ashtaroth; though others identify Diana and Juno with that goddess. Diana, again, was termed Luna and Fauna Fatua by the Romans, the Greeks worshipping her as Artemis and Selina."

"Do not you think that the term Jupiter is derived from—is, indeed, a corruption of—the Greek words Zeus and pater, *Zeus pater* meaning Father Zeus or Jove, in like manner as Apollo was called Father Apollo in Greece?" asked Olinda.

"Such appears to me the case," he answered, with an approving look. "Smith, however, in his 'Classical Dictionary' (who is generally a good authority), says the name comes from *Divus pater*, *Divus pater*, or *Dies pater*—the Father of Day."

"That seems far-fetched," she said.

"So I maintain," replied Edwardes. "Your derivation is much simpler, and much more likely to be correct."

After they had passed St. Eugène, Olinda asked her cousin to point out to her the Fountains of the Djins, which she knew were close by on the shore.

"There is the spot," he said in response. "You see that steep narrow path winding down the hill. It is at the base that the seven little springs bubble forth, and on the shingly beach to this side the Black and Moorish priestesses of

· whom I told you were stationed, performing their mystic rites among the assembled worshippers."

"And are those the rocks on which the Sudanese musicians were placed, to play in honour of the Genii, and to attract their attention?" asked Olinda, pointing to a low black ledge a few paces distant from the shore.

"That is the place," he answered. "And a rare uproar those Blacks made — enough to arouse the deafest and most obstinate Djin!"

"What a deeply interesting place!" she went on. "You must take me there some Wednesday morning, Henry, that I may witness the extraordinary scene."

"Be assured it will repay you for the trouble of rising so early," he replied, expressing at the same time the pleasure he would feel in escorting her.

"So that was where you first saw your Az-zahra's face?" thoughtfully remarked Olinda, addressing her cousin.

"Yes, on the top of the hill," he replied, "just where the ascending pathway ends."

"Ah! that was an unfortunate *rencontre* for you," she continued. "It has cost you many a sorrowful hour of doubt and disappointment."

"That it has cost me grievous doubt and bitter disappointment I freely admit," sighed Henry, sorrowing, however, most of all at the cruel way in

which Olinda had crushed the Arab, though forced through shame to keep this feeling concealed.

"I am so rejoiced that you doubt," his cousin went on, as she looked fondly in his face. "Oh! how I pray that these doubts may end in your doubting no more—in your becoming convinced of the wild insensate folly into which you would rush headlong!

"You surely do not dream of marriage with that poor heathen?" she resumed interrogatively, after surveying through the powerful telescope belonging to the yacht the rich coast-scene crowned by the picturesque heights of Bou-Zareah.

"I know not," he groaned. "Many strong reasons urge me not, and many powerful obstacles seem to rise up in the way; but, on the other hand, I love Azzahra better and truer than ever."

"Well—well! my poor fellow!" Olinda sadly said, as she put her hand affectionately on his arm. "I will weary you no more with my preaching, for I can see you are becoming low-spirited. Mark my words, though, Henry, you must make up your mind, and that shortly, as to what line you intend to pursue. You must take one course or the other. You must either act honourably; or else rudely, but manfully, break the tie asunder. The middle course, proverbially reckoned the safest, in this instance would be destruction—

bringing in its train nothing but ruin and despair to Azzahra as well as to yourself—working out for life the inevitable misery of both.”

The word “ready ’bout” from Edwardes now set all busily changing their positions, and moving to the opposite side of the yacht. In trying to perform this operation of getting across the deck, Miss Thornton always contrived to be too slow, the result being a merciless blow from the boom of the mainsheet, swinging about while the cutter was catching the wind afresh as her head forged round in the new direction.

Once she was struck fairly down by the boom, through not getting out of the way in time, and fell right over Lion, who, imagining that an unwarrantable liberty had wilfully been taken with him, growled at her savagely as she lay helpless on the deck at his feet, and threatened to make a fresh attack upon her nose.

After another tack, during which they stood well out to sea, they found themselves opposite the promontory of Pointe Pescade surmounted by its ruined castle, only to be approached from the shore by a narrow causeway; and a little farther along the coast rose the lofty square lighthouse of Cape Caxine, an exception to the general plan on which these edifices are built.

“We are making but little headway, I am sorry to say,” observed Edwardes after holding a consultation with his captain. “The Atlanta is abso-

lutely doing next to nothing in the teeth of this stiff breeze. At the rate we are working ahead all chance of our making Cherchel before darkness sets in is at an end ; and as to entering the harbour by night past the dangerous rocks at its mouth, the attempt would be madness. So we must determine either to stand straight out to sea by-and-by for the night, so as to get well clear of the land in case of rough weather, or else to turn back and run for Algiers before the wind. We have been out a long time now, and have made comparatively little way."

Although some of the party would probably have hesitated in the morning about starting, had they been aware of the ordeal before them, yet they shrank from putting about now and relinquishing their trip ; for they knew it would be as great disappointment to their host as to themselves, and they were consoled by having his assurance that no danger could be incurred. Besides, hitherto, the cruise had been a decided success. The wind no doubt blew rather too strong, and the yacht got knocked about a good deal as she forged through the spray ; still, the sun shone bright, the air was genial, and the scenes that they passed were viewed with admiration ; so that, in spite of their *désagréments*, they felt much enjoyment. Wherefore a decided negative, in which even Miss Thornton concurred, was given to the proposal for retracing

their steps—a solution of the difficulty so very simple, in this instance at least, notwithstanding the utterance to Æneas by the oracle of old.

“You have decided right,” joined in Edwardes after thus consulting his friends, “for you would have sacrificed a good deal of enjoyment without any sufficient cause. Were I alone I should not hesitate for a moment to hold on my course. To run back on account of a puff of wind like this would get me laughed at by every sailor in Algiers.”

On rounding Cape Caxine, the Koubba-er-Roumia, or Tomb of the Christian, came in sight, looking like a huge beehive on the hills. After long tacking and buffeting against the waves they found themselves alongside of the mysterious old pile. Their intention had been to land and explore the unique ruin; but such a heavy surf was running that no boat dared venture to approach the shore, could they have even succeeded in launching one and getting into it from the yacht.

“What good fortune to have been here when the shower of gold and silver passed out of the Tomb and rushed through the air!” Edwardes remarked, smiling. “Our mainsail might have stopped some of the coins on their way through the air for us to pick up on the deck.”

“What a refreshing shower!” exclaimed all

in chorus. "Did such rain as that always fall none would pray for dry weather."

"And umbrellas would be at a discount," added Johnson.

"On the contrary," retorted Olinda, "they would be in great demand. We would invert them to catch the golden drops *en route*."

"What is this story about the golden shower?" Johnson asked. "I never heard of money flying away through the air in such a manner, although I know from experience how rapidly it flies away out of one's pockets."

"Especially where there are nephews and nieces," Miss Thornton sadly ejaculated, giving a plaintive look at Frederick and Geraldine. "It is dreadful to think of the way one gets victimised!"

"If I were you I would not submit to such extortion," said Wilton, addressing his aunt, and smiling at her want of resolution. "Be firm, aunt, and start a rebellion."

"But what can I do?" she replied in her silly feeble way. "They tease me to such a degree I am forced to give them what they want."

"Oh! Aunt Alice! How can you say that?" screamed Geraldine, ably supported by Frederick. "You refuse us constantly—you are getting horribly mean and stingy!"

"Never mind them, Miss Thornton," interposed Johnson. "You and I will go off together

and explore a lot of these old buildings for treasure, to make our fortunes."

"Oh! I should be charmed," she replied, casting at him a coquettish glance.

"But how about this golden shower?" he resumed, addressing Edwardes. "A castle in the air we have all heard of, but a treasure in the air is a decided novelty."

Edwardes then related the legend of how a native of the Metidja Plain, on burning a mystic scroll given him by a Spanish philosopher, beheld the door of the Tomb burst open of its own accord with a deafening clatter that made him tremble from head to foot, on which a dense cloud of coins issued forth and flew over his head across the sea towards the shores of Spain. The door then closed again with another tremendous report that re-echoed far away among the hills of the Sahel.

"The old story, in fact, of fastening the stable-door after the steed had been stolen," added Wilton.

"Quite so," said Edwardes. "But one of the Turkish Deys of Algiers did not share this opinion, suspecting that large hoards still remained concealed in the mausoleum, of which he determined to obtain possession. At that time the entrance-door to the Tomb had not been discovered. The Dey therefore dragged up artillery from the city, to bombard and

raze to the ground the entire structure, hoping to grasp the coveted prize. No sooner, however, had he demolished the adjoining building, and brought his guns to bear on the Tomb itself, than the figure of the Christian, robed in white, appeared on the summit, exclaiming, 'Halloula to my rescue!' On this myriads of gnats, flies, and mosquitoes rose in clouds from the Lake Halloula in the Metidja, which so persecuted the Dey and his gunners that they were forced to beat an ignominious retreat, and relinquish their designs of destruction and spoliation."

"When the Hadjoute beheld all this vast wealth, I reckon he tried to catch it on its way over his head?" the American observed.

"He did, and succeeded too," replied Edwardes. "When he recovered from his astonishment he flung his burnous in front of the flying pieces of money, and was fortunate enough to intercept some in their aerial career."

"Good deed, too, to circumvent the stingy old Spaniard for his meanness," continued Johnson. "A man of any spirit would have given the poor Metidjian a large share in the spoil for so faithfully performing his behests."

"But you forget that the Arab earned his liberty in this way," Edwardes replied. "He was only released from slavery on the express stipulation of discharging this duty."

"I, for one, fail to see the advantages of being released from slavery," the American returned, who was a Southerner, and a warm advocate of "the institution." "I venture to say the fellow was twice better off before he got his liberty than after."

"He earned the inestimable boon," answered Edwardes, "of returning to the bosom of his wife and family."

Johnson hereupon took an immoderate fit of laughter. "Well, Edwardes," he exclaimed, "I gave you credit for better sense."

The violence of the surf preventing their landing at the Tomb of the Christian, Olinda examined the ruin through the ship's glass when they got abreast.

While surveying the building and the heights around, an object on the sandhills underneath, near the sea, attracted her attention. It seemed to be the figure of a man, in dark clothing, rolling about upon the sand. Edwardes concurred, and thought, by the colour of the dress, the man must be a gendarme, though why he remained in such a posture was inexplicable.

The mystery, however, was soon solved; as he watched, the man raised his legs high in air with his cocked hat resting on the top of his feet, clearly signalling for aid. Though sympathizing with the unhappy wretch, Edwardes could not refrain from a smile at the absurd

appearance he presented. On looking again he perceived that the man had his ankles bound together by a stout cord, having been doubtless left by the Arabs in this piteous plight, which accounted for his not rising, and for the strange antics he was performing.

Olinda was surprised that the gendarme did not wave his hat with his hands, even though they might be bound, instead of on the top of his feet in such a ridiculous manner; but Edwardes rightly surmised that his arms were pinioned behind his back, so as to prevent his escape by loosening with his teeth the knots of the camel's-hair rope that secured them, and then unbinding his feet with his liberated hands.

"Unfortunate man!" exclaimed Olinda. "Do try and save him; he will surely die of starvation if he be not rescued."

"Impossible, my dear lady!" he replied. "You see the tremendous waves that beat upon the shore. Even should a boat succeed in getting safely through the breakers, she could not possibly return."

"Oh! it is barbarous to let a human being perish in that way," Olinda persisted, horrified at the contemplation of such a calamity.

"Remember, though," he answered, "we must not risk the lives of our crew."

"You owned this minute," she pleaded, "that they might reach the land."

"So they might," Edwardes replied, "but likewise they might not. How would you like to see two fine young fellows drowned before your eyes?"

"Nothing of the sort would happen," persisted Olinda. "The boat would be swept ashore on the crest of the breakers."

"Yes, but probably capsized," he said. "How then about her crew? No—no, Miss Somerton, it cannot be done. In any case we should lose two of the best among our sailors and our boat for the night. With the stiff breeze blowing that is a greater risk than I can run. You see yourself the impossibility of their working back to us from the shore."

"How frightful," she pleaded, "to be almost within reach of this wretched fellow-creature, and to bear away without an effort to save his life!"

"Make your mind easy, my dear Miss Somerton," continued Edwardes. "No harm can happen during the night, and when we reach Cherchel to-morrow we will dispatch a horseman round to release him from his martyrdom."

"He may be murdered in the night by the natives, or devoured by wild beasts!" she interposed, almost in tears.

"This pinioning has clearly been done by the Arabs," said he, "who could have killed him instead at the time, had such been their intention,

with no eye to witness. Why then should they murder him now? As to the beasts of the field, none haunt here save hyænas and jackals, who are too arrant cowards to attack a living man."

"But you know not how long the miserable victim may have lingered in that pitiable condition," mournfully pleaded Olinda. "He may be at the last stage of exhaustion from cold and hunger."

"My dear lady, if we may judge by the energetic manner in which he kicks about and flourishes his hat on his feet," Edwardes responded, laughing, "he must be in possession of full bodily vigour. Depend upon it, a few hours' longer wait for deliverance cannot be of much importance."

"It does seem so unfeeling to leave him thus to his fate," she sighed. "How his heart will sink within him when he finds we will do nothing to help him in his distress!"

"He has sense enough to know the reason why," he returned. "At all events, there he must stay—I can do nothing for him."

Frederick Somerton, with boyish impulsiveness, volunteered to run the chance of trying to land and undo the bonds of the gendarme; but to this proposal the host would not listen.

"I should be extremely sorry," said he, "to encourage you in risking your life for no ade-

quate or urgent reason. Besides, I should be deprived of the use of one of my yacht's boats, and to that I strongly object."

This decision gave much satisfaction to Geraldine, who trembled at the thought of her favourite cousin being capsized among the billows, perchance to meet with a watery grave before their eyes.

By this time the day was so far spent that it became clear no chance remained of reaching Cherchel Harbour by daylight.

"From here we shall take a long run right out," said the host, as he brought the yacht's head round. "The Chenoua Mountains are close by, and there the coast becomes precipitous and dangerous. So we must give the land a good offing for the night. In the morning, should all go well, we shall stand in again, without risk of knocking down and demolishing a precipice. Meantime let us enjoy ourselves. *Carpe diem*—seize the passing moments—is my motto. There is plenty to eat and drink on board, plenty of room in the berths, plenty of all we can possibly require to make us comfortable. So we should be able to get on well—at all events for one night."

"Ay, and for several nights, I reckon," added Johnson.

"The longer, the better I shall be pleased," replied Edwardes, politely bowing to the ladies.

The sun sank down to rest with great lustre, surrounded by a brilliant mantle of glowing clouds, so that all turned in admiration to gaze on his glorious setting.

“What a magnificent sight are those gorgeous tints spreading over the glowing sky!” exclaimed Johnson to Olinda. “Yet does not the setting of the sun always make you sad? Does it not remind you of the close of life, when death will enshroud all at last in darkness and gloom?”

“Yonder dazzling sunset brings not such dismal reflections to my mind,” replied Olinda. “My thoughts extend farther than yours; I look forward to the great orb coming back again with renewed lustre.”

She then recited from memory some lines she had composed on the subject :

THE SETTING SUN.

Thou tellest me that when thou dost behold
Those gorgeous bursts of light on yonder hills,
With which the sun illumines their western slopes,
As slowly, solemnly he sinks to rest,
Thy mind is filled with melancholy thoughts
And, mournful, doth look forward to the hour
When thou, in common with all here below,
Must fall a victim to the scythe of death—
When thy brief day of sunshine shall be o’er,
And all thy joys be shrouded in the night.

To me that rich display of brilliant tints,
So welcome to the painter’s and the poet’s eye,
Is fraught with no forebodings such as thine.
Were I to moralise, I see around

On each familiar object—on each scene—
Alike the same inevitable stamp
Of change, decay, and finally of death.
The passing years that o'er me roll but seem
So many stepping-stones into the grave ;
Those forms that I remember fresh with youth,
Wit, talent, beauty, strength, and happiness—
Now stamped, alas ! with the forbidding marks
Of care, disease, age, and the waiting tomb ;
Those woodland scenes neglected and decayed,
So fair of old ; that gnarled and branching oak,
So leafless now, that in my youth kept cool
Its shadowed well ; yon mastiff, dull and stiff,
Who once would nimbly bound to where I stood—
All preach the same sad sermon to my mind :
On all appears indelibly inscribed,
In warning lines of flame, " Remember death ! "
But memory, stronger monitor e'en still
Than these unerring monuments of time,
Recalls to fond remembrance the loved friends
Passed to a happier world through that dread gulf
To which we imperceptibly are gliding on.
Dread gulf it is to all. But wherefore dread ?
For I behold those purpling hills that glow
Beneath the glories of the parting orb,
And, though their loveliness must soon depart,
Veiled in obscurity and lost to view,
Yet do I know that in the morn again
That orb of light will without fail return,
And in fresh brilliancy array their sides.
Thus do I hope when life's sad night is past
To see the Sun of Righteousness arise
With healing on his wings—the Lord of Life—
And shed his glory round my sin-stained soul !

"You are right, and. I was wrong, Miss Somerton," exclaimed Johnson, much pleased with her poem. "We should certainly banish gloomy thoughts as far as we are able, and learn to look forward with hope. I have been about the world a good bit, both by sea and

land," he continued, still admiring the sinking globe of fire, "and it has always struck me that sunsets at sea are more beautiful than on shore."

"The contrast of warm and cold colours accounts for this effect," said Olinda, replying to the remark. "Here we see the strong blue tint of the sea throws up with intense force the mellow colouring above, the two coming into immediate juxtaposition, owing to the curvature on the surface of the water caused by the spherical shape of the earth; whereas on shore a dull grey hazy middle distance intervenes, destroying the powerful combination of colours produced by uninterrupted mingling of distance and foreground."

"But how can there be foreground at sea?" asked Miss Thornton, sorely perplexed.

"Ah, quite right! You had no ground for what you said, Miss Somerton," added the Yankee with a laugh.

"Well, then, forewater, if you so prefer," answered Olinda, heartily laughing.

"In addition to the theory you hold, you must further bear this in mind," continued Johnson. "All changes and all objects at sea possess a fictitious importance, owing to the unvarying routine and dull monotony of ordinary ship-life, so that what would be lightly esteemed ashore assumes magnified proportions afloat. What excitement

prevails when a strange ship is sighted on a long and uneventful voyage! Yet the same vessel running into harbour would be regarded by landsmen with indifference."

"There may be some foundation for this explanation," continued Olinda; "still I think mine quite sufficient to explain on natural grounds what I have myself noticed as a fact."

"Perhaps so," he observed, not desirous of disputing the point, and seeing how she clung to her opinion.

"The glorious sunset pictures of Claude Lorraine," she went on, "are painted on the principle I have described. There you see how he makes the dark deep-blue of the water stand up boldly against the burnished gold of the sun, whose rays here and there light up the sparkling waves as they dance along."

"You are perfectly right, Miss Somerton," he replied. "I have many times admired these marvellous examples of art, and wondered at the extraordinary effect produced, without considering what means the painter employed to work out his idea."

"Miss Somerton has the best of the argument, I must say," observed Edwardes, addressing the American with a smile.

"Not a doubt about it," replied the latter; "I own myself beaten well at all points."

"Well, there is one part of the subject which

we are agreed upon," said Olinda, slightly colouring at the compliments she had received, "and that is that a rich sunset is one of the grandest sights in Nature."

"Such is unquestionably the case," added Edwardes, "and we know that in all ages admiration of the great luminary, amounting to worship among the ancients, has held firm hold on mankind."

"And though this worship was false," Olinda went on, "substituting as it did the visible emblem for the great invisible Power in heaven; yet was it pure compared with the foul rites introduced later under the sacred name of religion."

"Yes. Of all the systems of heathen mythology," proceeded Edwardes, "the worship of the Sun, and indeed that of the Moon as well, appear the most rational, and they indisputably were the earliest that presented themselves to the human mind. What could be more natural for a vulgar illiterate mind to believe than the theory that the Sun was made to rule the Earth by day, and that the Moon was made to rule it by night? And, ignorantly believing this, how natural that they should adore the objects exercising such unbounded influence over their destinies and fortunes!"

"Very true," replied Olinda; "and even down to our own day, these old-world pagan customs

have survived the overthrow of cities, the crash of empires, the destruction of religions, and the extinction of races ; for do not the two first days of the week, in our language at least, commemorate the names of the celestial bodies to whose worship, as heathen deities, they were set apart of old ? ”

“ It is a most remarkable fact,” Edwardes continued reflectively, “ and powerfully demonstrates what a firm hold this system of heathenism has maintained throughout all ages over the human race.”

“ Indeed the names of all our days of the week are of pagan origin,” she went on. “ Tuesday and Saturday are called after the Latin gods Jupiter (or Zeus) and Saturn ; while Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday commemorate the Scandinavian deities Woden, Thor, and Freia.”

“ Disgraceful, is it not, to be thus mixed up with heathenism ? ” he added, laughing.

“ It is indeed,” she responded ; “ we ought to be better behaved, and mend our ways.”

“ However, as regards the Sun and Moon, we must bear in mind, when trying to account for the introduction of offering them adoration, that the ancient Chaldeans and Babylonians, with whom their worship originated, were far advanced in the knowledge and study of astronomy. They were therefore fully cognisant of

the immense influence these celestial spheres do in reality exert over our terrestrial economy, though they were ignorant of the attraction of gravitation, by means of which the forces of these bodies are brought into operation."

"It was reserved for our Newton," rejoined Olinda, "to discover that the combined action of centrifugal and centripetal force maintains the universe in equilibrium, enabling our globe, attended by its satellite, to follow with undeviating regularity its prescribed orbit round the great central luminary."

"My belief is," Edwardes continued, "that the ancients were nearer the mark than ourselves in estimating the action and the influence of the Moon upon our globe. They worshipped the Moon as almost equal to the Sun in this respect, and I incline to think they were not so very far wrong. On account of its contiguity in space to the Earth, it must act, and be acted on again by us in return, with enormous power. The measure of lunar attraction we see illustrated before us twice every day by the phenomena of the tides, and—"

"Not here," eagerly interrupted Olinda, for she was warmly interested in the conversation; "you forget there are no tides in the Mediterranean."

"Pardon me, Miss Somerton, for contradicting you, but you are wrong," he gaily answered,

amused at the quickness of his fair companion. "There are a few spots in the Mediterranean where tides are perceptible, though the rise and fall are not very considerable, the most remarkable instance being, as well as I recollect, on the western coast of Sicily. When Pepin, King of the Lombards, was attacking the Rialto at Venice, his galleys were left high-and-dry by the fall of the tide, all that escaped capture being floated off afterwards at high-water."

"Pray forgive me for stopping you," Olinda resumed, deeply blushing. "I prevented you from finishing what you were going to say by my ill-timed observation, which I now find was as erroneous in principle as it was deficient in good manners. Will you kindly excuse the interruption, and finish your remarks, which were interesting me so much?"

"Well, I was about to observe," Edwardes continued, smiling, and making her a low bow, "that, judging by what we know, and what is reduced to a positive mathematical certainty, respecting the Moon's power of attraction over the waters of the ocean—mind, I said 'the ocean,' Miss Somerton, in contradistinction to the sea, out of deference to your stern rebuke—why should we shut our eyes to the fact that our satellite must of necessity exercise a similar amount of attraction over every object on the face of the Earth?"

"A very natural inference," she answered. "That is a highly important theory to study."

"Well, so I think," returned her companion. "But then, as you know, we all think our geese swans."

"In this instance," she interposed, "there need be no doubt as to the value of your suggestion, for it involves a question which has hitherto apparently been overlooked."

"If my theory be correct," he went on, "of which I entertain no shadow of doubt, what a simple explanation it affords for many phenomena and wonders of Nature we see around! Reading by this light we can understand why the trees of the forest and the grass of the field spring from out the ground straight and upright, in defiance of the central gravitation of the Earth, whose attribute it is to drag them downwards on the ground; why the mists and dews rise to the skies; why they are held suspended in clouds on high, until condensed by cold, to fall down again and refresh the parched soil; why the atmosphere does not descend on the ground, to become a dense gaseous stratum, smothering and destroying all animal and vegetable life; why the sea does not lose its fluid character, to become compressed and solidified at the bottom of its bed."

"With respect to the condensability of air and water I must differ from you," remarked Olinda,

pondering on what he urged. "An unvarying and undoubted attribute of these bodies is to retain their normal volume and elasticity. How impossible it is to compress either to any considerable extent! and what enormous mechanical power is gained by man through the skilfully applied agency of this wonderful resisting property!"

"I stand corrected," he owned with a smile. "Still, were there no lunar attraction to support and draw upwards these fluids, we know not what might result. However, I believe you are right, for the relation of cause to effect appears more hazy and undefined than I at first was led to suppose."

"So far as regards the other phenomena you have named, however," she replied, "there is no doubt on my mind that you are justified in your belief."

"I am glad I find some favour in your sight," he jestingly observed.

"You know I think very highly of your views and opinions," she kindly answered.

The evening air was becoming colder and the wind more boisterous, so they gladly retired below to the cabin, a course to which they felt the better inclined as the sea-breeze had given them excellent appetites. For it must be borne in mind that, however much the spiritual part of our nature may crave for the intellectual food

of science and learning—for the feast of reason and for the flow of soul—the material part, on occasion, will loudly demand more solid nutriment, giving no rest nor peace until its desire be gratified.

Man must eat to live—not live to eat. Even lovely woman must eat, however æsthetical and ethereal. “What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed?” are, after all, the great questions of life. Is it not principally with a view to solve these problems that agriculturists, merchants, artisans, speculators, tradesmen, and manufacturers enter the great arena of life in their several vocations, creating activity and prosperity where otherwise despondent stagnation would prevail?

In fact, if we take those who minister to our necessities and to our pleasures—who provide for our daily necessities for the adornment of our persons, and for our various amusements, good and bad—we sum up pretty well all who bestow wealth and prosperity on a nation, who produce what we term “modern civilisation,” but who, alas! too often cause their country to deteriorate, through the undue indulgence of luxury, into degeneracy and decay.

First in the list of our real or imaginary necessities ranks eating—real to satisfy hunger, imaginary to create a fictitious appetite. “*Le*

ventre gouverne le monde," shrewdly observed the Great Napoleon.

Even death must be commemorated by a feast. Soon as the interment is concluded, and the beloved one is laid in the cold grave to sleep his last sleep, his place at the festive board, which shall know him no more, is filled by another, when carousing celebrates what is styled by courtesy "the melancholy event," and completes the day's performance.

The true and disconsolate mourner even is perforce compelled to partake of food for the sustenance of life, though after, perhaps, a short term of protest against what would seem a heartless outrage on grief.

Even the faithful dog of the Scottish shepherd immortalised of late by a monument, who from day to day lay on his dead master's grave, in sorrow that would not be comforted, was forced at intervals to break, for the purpose of obtaining food, his dreary vigil at the tomb. What an example was that poor dumb animal! What a contrast to those of our race—and their name is legion—who know not what love nor what genuine disinterested sorrowing for the departed mean!

Olinda placed herself at table beside Wilton, with whom she affectionately conversed. She felt she had allowed Edwardes a second time to monopolize her too much throughout the day,

and could perceive that her cousin was again annoyed in consequence. Wherefore, though she derived such pleasure from Edwardes's talents, and from the information he so freely imparted, she constrained herself, with the prompting of a true woman's heart, to make reparation for her heedlessness.

Wilton appreciated this kind consideration for his feelings. He rejoiced to see her give so little heed to the absence of the French Marquis. He hoped that separation would break the spell the gay hussar had wound round her, and destroy the influence he had acquired over her guileless mind.

Olinda saw with pleasure the favourable change that had come over Wilton, and his appreciation of her society. Indeed, she had noticed him all day in animated converse with either his sister, the American, or Frederick. She began to hope, therefore, he was recovering from his terrible malady—that mental occupation and absence from that dreadful idolatress and demon-worshipper were beginning to cool down his ungovernable passion, and to bring him back again to the dominion of reason.

Thus the two cousins kindly watched and hoped, each believing the other was becoming cured of incurable folly.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GALE.

WHEN dinner was concluded Edwardes sent to invite the Captain down to join them. He was a fine manly honest old salt, and one whom his employer delighted to honour.

"Sit down, Captain, and take a glass of wine," Edwardes called out in a friendly voice as the skipper entered.

"Here's to your very good health, ladies and gentlemen!" the other replied as he drank his wine. "But excuse my sitting down; I must hurry back on deck."

"Why so, Salter?" Edwardes asked in surprise. "Anything gone wrong?"

"No, sir; all is pretty much about as usual," the other evasively answered.

"Something is wrong, Salter," anxiously observed Edwardes. "Come, let's have it out. What has happened?"

"Well nothing, exactly, has happened," the other replied, winking mysteriously at his master

and looking round at the ladies. "But I am going on deck, if you please."

"Oh! I know we are going to be wrecked again," screamed Miss Thornton, threatening a severe fit of hysterics; "I know we are!"

This foolish outburst of terror greatly irritated the host, and he angrily insisted that Miss Thornton should keep quiet.

"Now, Salter," he went on, addressing his skipper, "let us hear what you have to say; I always like to know the worst."

"Oh! do, I implore of you," pleaded Miss Thornton, humbly addressing Salter, with tears in her eyes, and forgetful in her alarm of Edwardes's rebuff. "Anything is better than suspense. The truth, the dreadful truth, must come out at last. What then can be gained by a few minutes' delay?"

"Quite right," joined in Edwardes, looking to Salter for a reply.

"There's nothing to know—at least as yet," continued the skipper with provoking evasiveness.

"Then why all this fuss?" asked Edwardes, beginning to feel irritated at the obstinacy of the man.

"Well, things begin to look uncommon queer and ugly overhead," rejoined the other. "We shall have a dirty night, sir. The sea is beginning to rise a goodish bit, and the wind is working round to the northward."

"How about the glass?"

"Been going down steadily all day, sir."

"And why did you not say so?"

"Pardon me, sir. I don't consider it my business to interfere when I am not in command. I am here to obey orders, and not to give my opinion, unless it be wanted."

"I see what you are thinking about," rejoined his master with bitter vexation. "You are huffed because I asked not your advice."

"Well, I think I might have been consulted," the other returned with a look of conscious though suppressed dignity, for he resented Edwardes's habit of taking sole command of the yacht to the exclusion of himself.

"Ah, well! it is too late to discuss these matters at present," said the host, restraining his anger against the man for his foolish professional conceitedness. "Do the best you can for us now; I leave everything in your hands."

"You may rely on my doing my best," replied the Captain, his *amour-propre* vindicated by Edwardes's conciliatory expressions. "It is a nasty black night, I tell you, and one never knows what may happen all in a minute. Here's to your good health, ladies, and a safe cruise!" he continued, addressing Olinda and Geraldine as he drank another glass of sherry; for Miss Thornton was lost in too deep

agitation to appreciate the compliment, or attend to aught save the appalling dangers she believed loomed ahead.

"What a fellow that is!" exclaimed Edwardes as Salter vanished up the companion. "He would have let everything go to wreck and ruin sooner than compromise his imagined importance one jot by giving the slightest hint about the possibility of matters going wrong—all just because I neglected to pay him the compliment of taking him into my confidence. In cases of difficulty or danger of course any sensible man would place himself in his captain's hands, but it is a nuisance to take their opinion about every trifle."

"The wind coming round to the north, and a lee-shore!" mused the American aloud; "I don't like that."

"No more do I," added Wilton. "The Captain is right, I suspect, in his estimate about what we may expect."

"But I have been at sea in weather ten times worse, and the Atlanta has fought it out bravely," pleaded Edwardes; "I do not see why she should not behave as well to-night."

"There can be no doubt but that she will behave well, and right well too," said Johnson. "That is not the question. The question is—what sort of weather is coming? Are we to have a gale, as the Captain appears to fear, that

will give any boat enough to do to behave well?"

"And such a lee-shore of rocks and precipices," Henry added.

"Stuff and nonsense!" their host exclaimed angrily. "Lee-shore indeed! when we have been standing well out to sea for hours. We are many miles away, my good fellow, from any shore this minute."

"I am not so sure of that," Johnson retorted. "The Captain told us now the wind had got round to the north."

"In my opinion," resumed Wilton, nothing abashed by the rude remark of the host, "we ought to make at once for Algiers Harbour, which the light on the pier will enable us to enter without danger."

"What do you say, Miss Somerton?" asked Edwardes, appealing to Olinda. "Shall I follow your cousin's recommendation?"

"I leave all to you," she replied calmly. "But had you not better consult your captain and be guided by his advice?"

This hint Edwardes gladly followed, owning at heart how wise she was to make this remark, and how thoughtless he had again been towards his skipper.

"Salter does not consider it necessary to give in," he resumed, after returning from the deck, "until we see a little more of the weather. At

present he will just keep a sharp lookout and let us know if any change for the worse takes place."

"I am very glad," broke in Olinda. "It is galling to give up an undertaking in which one has once embarked."

"Bravely spoken!" called out Johnson. "You are every inch a heroine!"

"After such a gallant speech from Miss Somerton," Edwardes added, "we must surely continue to battle along. Should, however, a gale come on, we will just scud before it for Algiers, though, to tell truth, I prefer remaining out at sea to approaching the shore at night in rough weather."

"Well, certainly, the shore, and especially a lee-shore, is not a pleasant neighbour in the dark when it is blowing great guns," assented the Yankee, though ominously alluding to their present probable position.

By this time it was getting late, so they retired for the night, after the gentlemen had been up on deck to hold a final conference with the Captain. But it was with considerable difficulty that Miss Thornton was got to her berth, as she would persist in remaining a fixture on the seat she occupied, in too profound dread to stir, and bitterly bewailing her cruel fate.

As for Geraldine, stimulated by the courageous example Olinda set, she went to rest with a light heart, unheeding of danger.

But Edwardes, though he lay down, could not sleep. That ejaculation of the American—"The wind coming round to the north, and a lee-shore"—kept ringing in his ear. Could it be that he was wrong in persisting to go on, and perhaps, risking the lives of his friends, as well as the lives of his crew? Was it dogged obstinacy of temper and foolish pride in the sailing powers of his vessel that kept him out at sea on such a wild blustery night? he asked himself, as he lay listening to the roar of the wind and the splash of the angry billows against the cutter's side.

"Impossible!" he ejaculated to himself, trying to reason down his apprehension. "This was not my doing alone; Miss Somerton even was in favour of going on, so was Salter, so was everybody."

Still he felt misgivings which could not be argued away. Neither wind nor sea had gone down, as he had fondly anticipated. On the contrary, both seemed to him to be rising, to his great discomposure, for he now realised for the first time the heavy responsibility he incurred by starting in the teeth of such a strong head-wind.

The gale now increased perceptibly in violence, so that the Atlanta began to labour frightfully until all her timbers strained and creaked. She was lying down with her gunwale almost

under the water, and pitching with tremendous force.

Edwardes became at length so seriously alarmed that he rose and crept softly, not to disturb or alarm the ladies, to Johnson's berth, whom he requested to dress and accompany him above, to talk matters over with the Captain. To this the American willingly assented, for he likewise entertained considerable uneasiness at the increased fury of the tempest.

As they got out on the deck a bright light came in sight through the dim mysterious gloom of the night, which in a few minutes passed close alongside, burning with intense brilliancy. It was doubtless the signal light of some vessel scudding before the storm, though neither hull nor sail was visible. But the superstitious sailors doubted not that some weird phantom ship had swept past, and fell into profound alarm at having so nearly run foul of the ghostly apparition.

Nor were their apprehensions allayed by what followed. A deep moaning roar resounded to windward, then down swept a squall that struck the Atlanta with irresistible force. The cutter reeled and staggered for a few moments in fruitless efforts to withstand the shock, when she went right over on her beam-ends, in which position she helplessly lay, without an effort to right herself.

Instantly Captain Salter called out to the carpenter at the top of his voice to get his axe and cut away the mast.

"She may right without that," interposed the American.

"She won't," bluntly replied Salter.

"But, without sails, what is to become of us?" the other continued. "The wind is now due north, blowing straight inshore. How can we escape certain destruction?"

"I know all that well enough," Salter rejoined in a voice of authority. "Leave the matter in my hands and don't you interfere; you will do more harm than good."

Johnson could not but acknowledge the justice of this remark, though it was not conveyed in the most refined or complimentary terms. He knew well that in such trying moments of danger everything must be left to one cool and experienced commander, whose word must be law.

He therefore contented himself by merely looking on without further comment, in which course he was copied by Edwardes, and by Wilton, who now scrambled on deck, all clinging to the rigging for support, and anxiously waiting to see what would happen next.

CHAPTER XIV.

ESCAPE.

WHEN night drew near Selim Mustapha listened for the footsteps of the gendarmes, and was overjoyed at the discovery that only one man had been placed on the beat to keep watch, who continued to patrol at a slow even pace, just such as his victim desired. Some few houses stood at either side between the café and the next turnings off the main street, so that the man took several minutes to go round the entire block, thus affording ample time to the fugitives to spring from the window at the back while the sentinel was leisurely passing the front of the house, and to hurry along a narrow winding lane that led straight away to the wild unclaimed hills.

The hour at length arrived for starting, when all the other inmates had retired to rest; then Selim Mustapha repaired to his child's room, whom, to his great satisfaction, he found restored

mentally and physically, and warned her to be ready immediately with Kredoudja. While they conversed the measured steps of the Frenchman were heard outside the window, on which the Arab hurried to the front to hearken there for the man's approach.

In a few moments he ran back in great glee, whispering that all went well ; and, softly raising the window, he jumped out into the lane beneath. Azzahra, Kredoudja, and Karakouch followed ; but the latter got hurt by falling as he leaped down, and gave a yelp of pain, which caused his owners great alarm lest it might be overheard.

Noiselessly lowering the window again, the party hastened along the lane, elated at having so successfully carried out their programme thus far, and entertaining now no apprehension of recapture.

The two young women suffered greatly through the roughness of the way, often stumbling over large boulder rocks that projected above the surface, and falling into holes, deep but luckily dry. After toilsome plunging about in the darkness, the fugitives reached a thick coppice on the side of the hill that sloped away from Cheraga. Here they determined to pass the night, in order that with the first dawn of morn they might descend through the dense brushwood into the valley beneath, and so continue their flight concealed

from the observation of those in the village above.

Lying down on the bare ground after they had pushed their way in for some distance through the copsewood, they were soon asleep, overcome by the fatigues and troubles of the day.

But the slumbers of Azzahra and Kredoudja were interrupted ere long by the dismal howlings of the savage beasts that prowled around close at hand, and by the noisy fury of Karakouch, who ceased not to indulge in vigorous responses. As for Selim Mustapha, his wild life of hardship and adventure in the deserts and mountains had so inured him to these nocturnal choruses that he slumbered on without a stir throughout the deafening din.

Presently the two girls became petrified with fright on hearing the footsteps of a man enter the scrub at only a short distance from where they lay. Still greater was their terror on discovering his nationality, when he called to his dog in French to keep in close to his side, and uttered imprecations against a tree-root over which he chanced to stumble.

"We are traced and pursued again, Kredoudja," faintly whispered Azzahra to the Black, livid and gasping with despair. "What must be done?"

"Your father must be aroused without a

moment's delay," answered the Soudanese with prompt energy.

Well Azzahra knew that her waiting-woman spake wisely, but her gentle nature revolted against what she felt persuaded must be the inevitable result. Apparently the death of the Frenchman could alone set them free, and bitter experience had taught her in what light estimation her parent would regard the foul deed. She shuddered at the thought of another murder being perpetrated, and this time before her very eyes.

The weakness of resolve her mistress exhibited, and her evident reluctance to take the only step that could ensure safety, sorely disconcerted Kredoudja; and she was on the point of rising to awaken her master, when her purpose was unexpectedly forestalled by Karakouch, who pulled so vigorously with his teeth at the burnous of Selim Mustapha that the Arab, with a loud malediction, started up and sprang to his feet, rightly concluding, by the steady perseverance of the dog, that danger was probably at hand.

And yet it is pretended, forsooth, that the canine race possess no reasoning powers! That their order of intellect is of a grade vastly inferior to man's is of course beyond dispute; but, at the same time, how can any attentive unprejudiced observer of the habits of animals deny that other

mental qualifications besides "instinct" govern their actions—qualifications shared by zoophytes, by the sensitive plant, and by those greatest of all wonders in the vegetable kingdom—the *Sarracenia*, the *Cephalotus*, the *Darlingtonia*, and other carnivora, "which form one more link," as Dr. Hooker rightly observes, "in the continuity of nature!"

Was it simply instinct, forsooth, that prompted the faithful greyhound to warn his master of the approach of one who might possibly prove a dangerous enemy?—that prompted him to remain near to assist in defence? Assuredly not. Mere animal instinct would have instigated the dog to consider solely his own individual welfare by flight, to desert his owners in their adversity, and leave them to their fate. For is not self-preservation the first law of nature?—a law regarded, alas! so much more scrupulously between selfish man and man than between man and his unselfish brute dependants, who are "all for him" while he is all for himself—a law so hard to depart from where one's interests are concerned, unless through the inculcation of purer and higher aims than mere selfish consideration. In the one case man is impelled by the instincts of uncultivated nature, in the other by the humanising effects of reason and brotherly love.

The inevitable conclusion is forced upon us,

alas ! by these reflections, that the brute is more unselfish, more noble, capable of more devotion, as a rule, than his lord and master—in fact, that his instincts become in a large degree swallowed up and destroyed by the reasoning process that points out man as a friend and protector to whom obedience and affection are due.

Selim Mustapha's fierce exclamation when disturbed by his faithful greyhound made the stranger aware that he was not the sole occupant of the coppice, as he had fondly imagined. He, too, was a fugitive from the police at Algiers, having been identified as an accomplice in a burglary at one of the villas on the heights of Mustapha Supérieur, and was endeavouring to reach Oran over the wild hills that he might escape into Spain from the hands of his pursuers.

Karakouch and his newly arrived rival were not long in getting up a deafening duet of mutual defiance, to the dismay of their masters, who feared that the uproar might attract the attention of the gendarmes in the village close by, and draw them to the spot, knowing that both fugitives were accompanied by dogs when passing through Cheraga. They therefore lost no time in pacifying the excited animals and stopping their dismal howlings of rage.

Selim Mustapha then advanced towards the newcomer, holding his dagger in his hand

behind his back, ready for action, and angrily demanded the reason of the intrusion.

In extreme consternation the Frenchman protested his innocence of harbouring evil intentions, and solemnly declared it was altogether by accident that he entered that part of the wood.

"That is false!" thundered forth Selim Mustapha. "You are a spying traitor, and you have tracked us hither to our destruction!"

"As I live," meekly pleaded the man, "I speak the truth! Far from me be the desire to bring injury or calamity upon your heads!"

"You speak lies," roared the Arab in fury, "and you must die! If you mean no wrong, wherefore come here at this hour of the night?"

"In mercy spare my life!" shrieked the stranger, sinking on his knees. "Wherefore kill a wretch like me, who never did you harm? Alas! alas! that I should have succeeded in escaping from the clutches of the Algiers police, only to have my carcass flung down here as food for the jackals and hyænas!"

On hearing the young man's account of being tracked down like himself, the heart of Selim Mustapha relented in sympathy, and he lowered the armed right hand with which he was prepared to strike. Besides, the humble and earnest demeanour of the gasping suppliant at his feet offered so great a contrast to the insolent

self-sufficiency of the French authorities that he became favourably impressed with the truthfulness of his story, and determined to show mercy—at least for the present—unless any fresh occurrence should reawaken his suspicions.

He desired the stranger to arise, and inquired the nature of the crime he had committed. When he found it was burglary, he observed, addressing his new acquaintance with the air of a connoisseur whose mind was cultivated by practical experience :

“Burglary should never be attempted unless a man is fully prepared for all contingencies that may arise. Should the inmates attack and threaten the life, or even the liberty, of the assailant, he must be ready unhesitatingly to act without mercy in self-defence and slay his opponent!”

“Of that I am aware,” replied the other in a firm tone; “such is the rule by which I am guided.”

“And on those principles you acted?” inquired the Arab.

“Most undoubtedly,” the Frenchman continued. “He is no man who embarks in an enterprise of danger with a faint or wavering heart, and who shrinks through mistaken feelings of philanthropy from effecting his settled purpose.”

“Spoken like a hero!” exclaimed Selim

Mustapha, overjoyed at thus meeting with a kindred spirit. "Would I had some noble brave hearts like yours to share my glorious triumphs in the Desert!"

When Kredoudja overheard her master address the stranger in such friendly and confidential terms she felt greatly alarmed, for she entertained shrewd suspicions that the intruder was in reality a police agent on their trail, who should have been remorselessly made away with. Why spare this traitor, she wondered, when the other was murdered with such manly and prompt decision? Spy or no spy, the safe and proper course would be to take his life, when there would, at all events, be one abhorred Giaour the less to rule over them.

As for Azzahra, although at first she shared the unfavourable convictions of her waiting-maid as to the man's intentions, she by degrees became convinced, as she listened to his manner of speech, that he was no disguised emissary of the Government, and she rejoiced that her father had spared his life. Several times she had been on the point of springing forward to stay the arm of the assassin when about to deal the fatal blow; but she shrank from incurring his displeasure by interference that would of a surety have been unavailing where the struggle was to be for life and freedom.

Though relieved from such a weighty burden

of excitement and terror by this escape from witnessing the shedding of blood, she could not shut her eyes to the fact that, according to his own confession, the man was a criminal of the lowest and most desperate type, whose proximity throughout the night would be a pregnant source of danger. Indeed Selim Mustapha, after due reflection, came round to this opinion, informing his companions that they must all three keep watch by turns until the hour arrived in the morning for continuing their flight.

Little did Selim Mustapha suspect that this man whom he had spared knew him well by repute, and was thoroughly conversant with every incident of his life. Through the vigilant observation of the thieves and reprobates with whom he consorted in Algiers, and who made it their business to study the habits and ways of the police, he had learned that the Arab was strongly suspected of being the terrible leader of the insurrection in the Sahara, and that he was consequently kept under the strictest surveillance. Before making his escape from Algiers he heard further from his associates that Selim Mustapha had left the city, followed by the police agent who was known to dog his steps, and of whom no tidings had since been received.

The moment, therefore, the Arab boasted of his "glorious triumphs in the Desert," he felt

persuaded that Selim Mustapha stood before him, eluding pursuit in that lonely wood at night, and working his way southwards to head his insurgent band. He knew this man, who so nearly murdered him, lay under strong suspicion of having slain the missing emissary of the Bureau Arabe, by reason of which accusation he would assuredly be closely followed until hunted down. His company was consequently to be carefully avoided by one in bodily fear himself of arrest, wherefore the stranger determined to steal away ere the morning light should come.

Creeping cautiously through the tangled boughs, so as not to let his movements be discovered until he had got some distance away, he turned round out of reach of the Arab's pursuit, and called out with a mocking laugh :

"Farewell, Selim Mustapha! May 'glorious triumphs in the Desert' await you!"

After such a scornful taunt, and such a base return for the mercy shown, no doubt remained in the minds of the Arab and his companions that they had been duped by the wily stranger, and that they would be in his power with the coming morn, unless they could escape through the meshes of the net spread around their path.

Bitterly Selim Mustapha and Kredoudja bewailed now that the deceitful wretch had not been stricken to the ground, even Azzahra being forced to own that he richly merited such a fate.

Still she felt glad the deed of blood had not been perpetrated, before her especially, hoping that they might still contrive to hasten away through the gloom without detection.

To carry out this purpose she urged her father not to lose a moment in pressing forward, worn-out and exhausted though she felt.

Owning the wisdom of this resolve, the Arab led the way down the wooded slope, carefully picking his steps in silence through the wild and rugged cover; but sorely he regretted he dared not remain to follow the perjured deceiver, and drive his trusty steel into the liar's false heart. He could not refrain, however, from sending a Parthian shot after his enemy.

"Cowardly treacherous miscreant!" he called out, "when we meet again your life shall pay the forfeit of this base perfidy!"

A peal of derisive triumphant laughter and the loud roarings of the wild animals around were the only responses to the savage but empty threat.

CHAPTER XV.

ALL BUT RECAPTURED.

WHEN day at length broke, Selim Mustapha and his fellow-fugitives perceived with gladness that in front lay wild broken ground as far as the eye could reach, over which they could march in safety, far away from roads or human habitations. As a precautionary measure, however, Kredoudja was dispatched to mount a neighbouring hill, under cover of the scrub, her blue burnous being considered less liable to attract notice than the white ones worn by Azzahra and her father. Her report being favourable, they continued their journey with lighter hearts.

By-and-by Selim Mustapha informed the young women that they would presently be forced to wade across the Oued Mazafran, a deep river intersecting their course, as they dared not approach the highroad to go over the old wooden bridge at Douaouda.

As soon as they reached the stream the two

girls were in despair at the depth of water. But their guide reassured them by promising to conduct them to a ford where they could get over without difficulty or danger. So far as danger was concerned he kept his word, but such considerable difficulty was experienced in the passage, with regard to their apparel, that the Arab was obliged to retire out of sight until the process was concluded, his absence being most welcome to the fair waders, who were thus enabled, unwatched, to indulge their hearty merriment at the unwonted appearance they presented.

After getting safely across, and proceeding some distance along the uncultivated scrub-clad plain, they reached the dry bed of a mountain stream overshadowed by trees, and lying considerably below the level of the surrounding country, in which secluded spot they decided to make a halt, that they might obtain some rest after their sleepless night.

They had not long enjoyed their slumbers on a shaded grassy knoll, beneath a spreading willow-tree that concealed them from above, when they were aroused by the loud clatter of hoofs along the level pebbly channel, and by the sound of many voices approaching. The women were in great consternation; but Selim Mustapha, knowing so well the habits of the natives, and how they use these dried-up water-

courses in rainless weather as highways in districts where no roads can be met, rightly surmised that a convoy of Arabs, with their asses and mules, were at hand.

As the party drew nearer Selim Mustapha found his belief strengthened by hearing them converse in his native language, and shortly their white burnouses and their veiled women, as they turned a sharp corner close at hand, set all doubts at rest.

Most of the men were armed, carrying pistols, daggers, and long flint matchlocks; and many of the women were seated astride on mules, with their feet resting on the bottom of large panniers suspended at either side of the animal from a small pad on its back—a primitive substitute for saddle and stirrups.

The group of Arabs with their laden beasts as they advanced—the grey river-bed—the green trees above arching across and throwing down dark massive shadows, the flashing sun-rays lighting up bright bits here and there in forcible contrast—the flower-clothed river-banks, and the small pools of pellucid water remaining from the last mountain-flood, on whose smooth unruffled surface were reflected all the varying objects around, formed a lovely composition for a picture such as the artist would love to delineate.

Azzahra, whose natural taste for the Fine Arts had been largely developed by her Christian

instructress, admired the picturesque scene with enthusiastic delight ; but she held her peace, and abstained from expressing the admiration she felt, for well she knew how little such remarks would be appreciated by her illiterate and un-æsthetic companions.

The Arabs had already taken a long journey, and gladly halted for a noontide rest in company with their new acquaintances. When they were about to proceed again on their way, Selim Mustapha begged of them to let Azzahra and her attendant mount on a couple of their mules, telling what great fatigues the young women had undergone, and how unaccustomed they were to travel on foot. The country was now so hilly and wooded, and their course lay through such remote untrodden wilds, that no probability seemed to exist of their actions coming under the notice of any whose observation might be attended with danger. Besides, even should Europeans cross their path, no suspicion could be excited by the girls travelling on muleback in their humble dress, for they would seem part of the convoy with whom they journeyed, many of whom were similarly clad.

To Selim Mustapha's request the Arabs cheerfully responded, for their course was likewise westwards along the waterless roadlike riverbed ; and after it turned towards the sea, they purposed keeping for a considerable distance

close to the shore. Two children were therefore made dismount and walk, whose places Azzahra and Kredoudja thankfully accepted, both much refreshed by their midday halt and slumber.

Towards evening the time arrived when the two parties must separate, Selim Mustapha wishing to strike inland at once for the Chenoua Mountains, while the remainder held to their plan of continuing to follow the windings of the bay. Wherefore the young women lifted their feet out of the panniers that hung by their mules' sides, and nimbly sprang to the ground ; when, after many professions of gratitude for the kindness displayed, and after having purchased a supply of dates and of thin flat cakes resembling the scones of Scotland, which the natives make to perfection, Selim Mustapha and his two female companions resumed once more their lonely pilgrimage.

The Tomb of the Christian was now at hand, towering above them in its commanding eminence, and Azzahra would gladly have ascended to explore the ruin ; but this her father would not permit, prudently pointing out what serious risks might be incurred were they to expose themselves to view on such an elevated situation.

As they passed along the slope beneath, Azzahra often cast up longing glances at the mysterious mausoleum, when on a sudden she

beheld the figure of a man appear on its summit, who made a precipitate descent the moment he turned his eyes towards the wayfarers and perceived their approach.

The rapidity of his movements struck Azzahra as so remarkable, and apparently so connected with the detection of herself and her companions, that she became alarmed and mentioned to her father what she had seen, who fully shared her worst suspicions.

Nor were they left long in suspense, for in a few minutes the blue uniform of a gendarme appeared among the *broussaille* aloft. The man was running down the hill at a rapid pace and clearly in their direction, as he threaded his way through the lentisk, myrtle, and wild olive bushes.

Beyond all doubt a death-struggle was at hand, for escape was manifestly impossible unless by taking this man's life, and Selim Mustapha pitilessly prepared to perpetrate the deed of blood.

They were now some distance away from the shore; but a heavy gale was blowing inland with such fury that the breakers roared again and again with loud thundering explosions as they hurled themselves in foaming surf upon the strand, and the deafening din was wafted afar on the wings of the wind. The report of his pistol, therefore, could not be overheard by any

in such a lonely spot, and with this weapon, being the most safe and effective, he determined to assassinate his assailant.

Desiring Azzahra and Kredoudja to retire out of view behind a large bush of evergreen oak, a command Azzahra obeyed with a sorrowing and shame-stricken heart, Selim Mustapha stood awaiting the advance of the Frenchman.

“So you thought you were going to escape, my brave friend?” the latter began in a jeering bantering tone; “but you see your mistake, don’t you? You had but little chance of slipping past this way while I kept my lookout on the top of the Koumba-er-Roumia, and my comrade was posted on the high hill that commands the rest of this lonely narrow tract, into which we doubted not you would plunge rather than follow roads where capture was inevitable. All day we have been on the watch since the Quahouadji missed you this morning, when instantly we started on horseback to intercept your flight. Now you are my prisoner, my fine fellow, and had best submit quietly to your fate. Resistance is hopeless, for aid is close at hand.”

Selim Mustapha was unaware that the gendarme, before descending from the top of the Tomb, had signalled to his comrade to follow. He therefore felt assured that ample time must elapse before the second man named by his assailant appeared on the scene, to enable him

to carry out safely his plan of murder, and afterwards to effect his retreat.

But, though prepared to assassinate, he feigned humble submission. He protested that he would surrender without offering obstruction, but prayed that the two women might be allowed to proceed unmolested on their way.

"Likely story indeed!" responded the officer jeeringly; "my companion will soon be here, when we shall get the whole lot of you."

Still the companion came not, having mistaken the signs made, and after long waiting the gendarme advanced towards Selim Mustapha with a blustering air.

"Now, my brave friend," he said, producing a pair of handcuffs, "if you are sincere in your professions of submission, down on your knees, that I may decorate you with the Order of Merit!"

His prisoner meekly obeyed the command, and the Frenchman came forward unsuspecting of treachery.

As he was on the point of preparing to put the manacles on his apparently trembling captive, the latter suddenly drew a pistol from beneath his burnous and fired up at his adversary, sending the bullet into the lower part of the body. With a deep groan the wounded man fell to the ground, when Selim Mustapha drew his dagger and was on the point of striking the

final blow ; but his arm was stayed by Azzahra, who rushed from her place of concealment to plead for the life of the writhing wretch.

Rage and disappointment seized on the soul of the Arab, but he hesitated to deal the death-stroke before the eyes of his pure-minded daughter.

“You ask for the life of our bitter enemy,” he said, addressing Azzahra ; “but have you considered what the result may be? Should he sufficiently recover to mount the hill, he will put his comrade on our track, and we shall be plunged afresh into danger from which we must extricate ourselves by the same means I have just employed. Instead of but one death, two will occur. As to this accursed infidel, he must die from my pistol-shot. See you not that wound must needs be fatal? Better, then, put an end to his sufferings, and send him straight down to the foul spirits in Gehenna !”

But the horror-stricken girl would not consent to the perpetration of such barbarity, imploring her father to hasten away, and leave the man the chance of being discovered and rescued from death by his friend.

“So sorely wounded is he,” she pleaded, “you see he cannot stir hence ; the wind and sea will prevent his cries being heard, and we can conceal him where he will not be seen until we are far on our way.”

Her father and Kredoudja most reluctantly agreed to this proposal, the former insisting, as an indispensable condition, that the victim should be left bound hand-and-foot.

Taking off the rope of camel's-hair that confined his haïck round his head, he tightly secured the hands and feet of the helpless gendarme, and left him writhing on the ground in the pitiable condition in which the party on board the Atlanta saw him when they passed by, unable to render assistance.

Then Selim Mustapha and his youthful companions, exulting at the successful manner in which they passed through this terrible crisis, hastened away, and directed their course to the house of the Kaïd of the Beni-Menasser in the Chenoua Mountains.

CHAPTER XVI.

WRECK OF THE YACHT.

ON the Atlanta's mast crashing overboard beneath the strokes of the axe, and the weight which held her down on her beam-ends being thus removed, she at once righted herself, to the intense relief of those below, who had been expecting every moment that the vessel would heel completely over and plunge down along with them into the depths of the waters. But when she stood upright again, freed from the restraint of the sails and mast as they dragged through the sea by her side, she bounded madly forward, tossed to and fro, the helpless sport of the winds and waves.

Anxiously all now awaited the dawning light of morn, and peered out through the darkness to catch the earliest glimpse of any danger ahead.

The first streak of day in the east revealed to their terrified gaze what the American had regarded with so much apprehension during the night—the mountains of the Chenoua rising up

at only a few miles' distance, directly to leeward of the course along which they were scudding with lightning speed.

Not far to their right lay the small sheltering port of Cherchel, but towards this haven of safety it was impossible to steer, the *Atlanta* having become completely unmanageable. Aid from thence was also vain to look for in the present state of the elements; yet, in the hope that signals of distress might be heard there, and that the inhabitants might hasten by land along the coast to render assistance in the event of his vessel being shipwrecked, Captain Salter fired minute-guns, to indicate his position and danger, little foreseeing what actors he was preparing to bring upon the scene.

When at the distance of about a mile from the cliffs the anchors were let go, in the expectation that the vessel might ride out the gale until the steamer from Algiers to Oran, which would shortly pass, came up to relieve them from their perilous position. But vain was the hope! The billows rose with merciless fury and wildly swept the decks, so that the seamen could with difficulty keep from being carried overboard. The cutter now plunged and laboured fearfully, and shortly it became clear that she was dragging her anchors, so that before long she must be hurled upon the shore, and most probably be dashed to pieces by the shock.

A number of small white moving objects now became visible on the tops of the mountains, which rapidly descended the slopes and cliffs towards the water's edge, and which at first, owing to the way they crept along the ground, were supposed to be flocks of sheep. But on looking through his glass Edwardes discovered them to be white-burnoused Arabs, crawling down on hands and knees, so as to attract as little notice as possible, who, on reaching the foot of the cliffs, vanished at once into some hidden place of concealment.

That they harboured evil intentions was evident, and that they were but awaiting the moment when the yacht should be swept against the rock-bound coast to plunder and probably murder the survivors. For the Arabs who rob are given to kill as well. They fear to let their pillaged victim go forth to publish abroad their crime and drag them to the bar of justice. In such a wild uninhabited country a murdered man is easily concealed, to tell no tales and never to be heard of again in his lonely resting-place. To murder therefore they incline, as the more excellent way.

Convinced of the sinister designs of these men, thus afoot at such an early hour of the morn, and who still continued to pour down the hills, Edwardes gave orders that the small-arms belonging to the yacht should be got ready, so

that they might make the best defence they were able—or, at all events, sell their lives as dearly as possible.

Olinda's noble qualities shone forth when she found the double danger to which they were exposed, both from the elements and from the hand of man. Taking in her hand a loaded revolver, she resolved to assist in slaying these bloodthirsty assassins should they commence an attack, and should she have the good fortune to escape a watery grave. Her good example and courageous demeanour inspirited all, even Miss Thornton declaring that she would do battle with the enemy; though the bravery of this lady, her audience believed, was pretty sure to evaporate in the moment of danger.

Slowly, surely, the Atlanta, groaning and labouring, sped onward to her doom. The black frowning rocks were but a few yards distant, and the fatal collision seemed inevitable, when the yacht ran upon the ground and became fixedly imbedded in the sands. Here a projecting headland afforded some shelter from the fury of the storm, so that the vessel was not broken up by the roaring waves, as at first seemed inevitable.

After long and anxiously awaiting this catastrophe, and perceiving that no immediate chance of destruction threatened the vessel, the Arabs hidden behind the rocks began to fear that the

signal-guns which had been fired might bring succour to the wreck, and that so their prey might escape out of their clutches. Wherefore they prepared to commence the attack, thinking that if they succeeded in shooting down those on board they could manage to work their way out and carry off their booty into the recesses of the hills above, stowing it away in a spot of safety until all danger of inquiry and search had blown over.

To carry out this fiendish purpose they rose up in a mass from their hiding-place behind a long ledge of rock that sloped down abruptly to the sea, and were on the point of firing at those on deck, when a tall and graceful young Arab woman in delicate attire bounded in front of the row of unwieldy flint matchlocks, and with an air of authority made signs to desist.

Great was Henry's astonishment and dismay to perceive that this was his Azzahra. While wrapt in wonder as to what could induce her to take part in such disgraceful scenes, where the shedding of blood was clearly meditated and planned, an aged man, whom he recognised as the father of Azzahra, gave the delicate creature a rude repulsive shock, motioning that she should move aside. In attempting to withstand his violence and stay his murderous hand, the unhappy girl stumbled on the slippery rock, and, after a few helpless struggles to regain her

footing, was precipitated headlong into the yawning watery gulf below.

Acting on the blind impulse of love, and heedless of the risks he ran of being drowned himself, or at least of falling into the clutches of remorseless enemies, Henry leaped from the vessel's side into the surging hissing tide, to snatch his beloved one from its devouring eddies, before any could interfere to stop his mad unreasoning resolve. No doubts, no vain regrets, filled his mind at such a supreme moment. No doubts, no fears for her inferiority, no odious comparisons with his accomplished cousin, occupied his thoughts. The wild ungovernable passion of love reasserted its sway and triumphed over all.

Valiantly he struggled amidst the surging breakers, but in vain. All his efforts to gain the shore proved unavailing, and becoming exhausted he was about to sink. Seeing the dangerous plight to which he was reduced, Edwardes and the American called up Lion from below, and sent him into the sea to save the drowning man. The brave dog quickly reached him, and held him up in his powerful jaws; but by ill-luck, instead of returning to the Atlanta with his burden, he carried him on shore, just under where the Arabs were congregated, and close to where Azzahra lay at the water's edge; for she had, though with great

difficulty, succeeded in scrambling on to the land, half stunned by her fall, and exhausted by her immersion in the sea.

Selim Mustapha recognised at once in the rescued man the Christian who had partaken of his hospitality at Algiers, and whom his friend Al-Mansour had suspected of exchanging signals with his child, though in his alarm he had failed to remember him at the Sahel. Here was that child now placing herself in front of the weapon that was about to take his detested life. His black suspicions were aroused, and he resolved to glut his vengeance with the blood of the Giaour, when he had taken away Azzahra from beside him and laid her in a place of security, to recover under the care of the faithful Kredoudja, who remained by her side.

On his return to execute the bloody deed, he and his associates in crime stood up to fire down at their defenceless victim; but a sharp volley from the yacht made them desist, and lie on the ground again behind their cover. Selim Mustapha, however, not to be baulked of gratifying his desire, was on the point of leaping down to slay the man for whose blood he thirsted, regardless of the risk he himself incurred, when the Oran steamer came in sight as she rounded the promontory of the Djebel Chenoua close at hand.

Fear lest his favourite daughter should fall

into the hands of the Christians now solely occupied his thoughts, to the exclusion of all other considerations ; for he saw a boat lowered from the ship, which proceeded to the succour of the stranded yacht. His foes would be on land in a few minutes, and it might then prove too late to bear Azzahra up the steep mountainside in her exhausted and helpless condition.

Taking her therefore in his arms, he carried her away with the assistance of his followers, and soon they all passed over the crest of the mountain and were lost to sight.

Henry and Lion were conveyed back on board the yacht, to the great joy of the latter, who was perfectly unconscious of the wrong he had done, and of the catastrophe he so nearly brought about by his unfortunate mistake.

The steamer now took the Atlanta in tow, as her hull was, fortunately, uninjured ; all remained on board, for the sea was so rough that it was thought unadvisable to let the ladies venture to the larger vessel in an open boat.

On reaching Cherchel the yacht remained there for repairs, the crew being sent on shore, and the rest proceeding by the steamer to Oran.

But before leaving Cherchel, Olinda entreated that aid might be sent to the unhappy gendarme who lay bound hand-and-foot on the seashore beneath the Tomb of the Christian, and whose cruel fate had been forgotten by the remainder

of the party in the contemplation of their own calamities and dangers. A messenger on horseback was accordingly dispatched to loose the man's bonds and set him free, if he were still alive.

Henry had remained so long immersed in the sea, and had gone through such mental excitement, that a severe attack of illness ensued, resulting in delirious unconsciousness. While lying on his couch in the cutter in this condition, tended by his sister and by Olinda, he raved incessantly about Azzahra; exclaiming that she must have been swallowed up by the billows, and bemoaning her untimely fate.

In vain he was assured that they had seen her carried over the hills by her people, and that she was safe.

"Safe!" he cried, springing up, while the wild glare of fever glittered from his flashing eyes. "Know you that her bloodthirsty father recognised in me his former guest? Know you how he understood Azzahra was solely desirous of saving my life when she sprang forward before the line of levelled muskets to forbid their discharge the moment I stood up on deck? Now you tell me she is again in his clutches, and that she is safe! You call that 'safety,' forsooth! Away with such senseless folly!"

And, burying his face in his hands, he burst into a tempest of wild passionate tears, groan-

ing aloud, and smiting his forehead with his hands.

While continuing in this excited condition, Olinda knew that to reason, or even try to offer consolation, would only be productive of harm ; yet she sorely grieved to behold him still a prey to such baneful and blind infatuation. Were one drop wanting, she thought, to fill to the brim the cup of Azzahra's degradation, surely what he had just witnessed heaped up the measure and stamped her as the basest of women ! The conduct of this young fury in joining a band of wreckers bent on murder and rapine should have opened the eyes of rational intelligence, and made him regard with loathing aversion one who thus forgot and disgraced her sex. Were it not for the accident of seeing Henry upon the stranded wreck, this fair fiend would doubtless have joined in the foul attack, and with her delicate hand have shed the blood of men struggling to rescue their lives from the perils of the deep, whose disastrous case seemed to call instead for the succour of all retaining a vestige of humanity within their breasts. Yet of this female demon her deluded cousin still raved ; for her his love still burned !

With a shudder of pity and despair, Olinda turned away from the wretched man and left him alone, a prey to his miserable reflections, deeming this the wisest course to pursue.

“Come, Geraldine,” she exclaimed sorrowfully to her young cousin, “let us see how your terrified aunt fares after the fearful scenes she has passed through. Here, alas ! we can be of no service.”

CHAPTER XVII.

HOME OF THE KAÏD.

DISCONTENT and disappointment reigned in the house of the Kaïd of the Beni-Menasser when the wreckers were seen returning empty-handed, without the anticipated and coveted spoil. The wives of the great man in particular were prepared to receive him with a chorus of indignation, unheeding for the occasion his unquestioned powers of flagellation and divorce; for all the morning they had been looking forward to a rich harvest of treasures and ornaments, and now they beheld their bright expectations rudely scattered to the winds. But he was in no mood to brook their reproaches, which he speedily cut short, pointing out Azzahra's pitiable condition, and confiding her to their tenderest care.

Now the Kaïd's youngest wife, a child of fifteen, to whom he was but lately married, had conceived a great affection for Azzahra, and the two had passed most of their time in each other's

society since Azzahra's arrival with her father. The night before they were asleep together, when they were aroused from slumber by a loud commotion and tramping of feet through the house. Springing from their couch to learn the cause of this unusual occurrence, they hastily performed their simple toilette, which merely consisted of smoothing their rumpled hair; for female vanity is the same in all climes, and never lets pass an opportunity, however humble, of seeking to gain the favour and admiration of the opposite sex.

On learning that signal-guns had been heard, and that a dismasted vessel was drifting rapidly on to the precipitous shore below, Azzahra insisted on accompanying her father and their host the Kaïd to the scene of the impending disaster, notwithstanding the earnest entreaties of Zorah, her newly acquired friend.

"Keep aloof, and take no part in such deeds," exclaimed the latter, who for an Arab displayed a large share of feminine tenderness of heart, owing to her youth and inexperience. "You know not what crimes may be committed, what horrors you may behold."

But her hot-headed companion would not brook contradiction; her thirst for romance and adventure held the mastery, and she listened not to the voice of reason.

"My presence on the spot will prevent the

perpetration of crime," she answered, "should such be contemplated, which I gravely doubt; for surely your husband's position would preclude his taking part in any deed of blood, even should his desires incline that way."

"On the contrary," Zorah replied, "his position forces him to murder where valuable plunder is at stake; for were a man stripped of his wealth, and then suffered to depart, the accursed Franks would levy a fine on the Kaïd of the district, and we should probably be forced to pay more than the value of what we had taken. Think you this will be the first wreck on the Chenoua? Many, many a vessel has been dashed upon this iron-bound coast whose crews have never been heard of more, and, praise be to Allah! my husband is rich."

These words of terrible import made Azzahra hesitate and tremble; but she yielded to the fascinations of temptation, and went.

The ill-success of the expedition, as well as the drenched and enfeebled condition of her friend, sorely perplexed the mind of Zorah, and she embraced the earliest opportunity to seek an explanation of the mystery. Azzahra related what had happened, and told how through her instrumentality the shedding of blood had been prevented.

The advantages resulting from this interference Zorah could not quite perceive. It is true she

urged her friend not to join the wreckers on their way, but it was altogether another matter, once she was present, to let the prey escape through unnecessary meddling, thereby robbing her of the presents she anticipated.

“What impelled you to such an act of folly,” she demanded of Azzahra, “as to leap up in front of our men just as they were about to fire? It was a miracle you were not shot. Your father acted perfectly right in pushing you aside.”

“But not in angrily hurling me down to the sea,” the sorrowing girl replied. “Oh, Zorah! if you knew all, you would pity me from your heart!”

This was sufficient to arouse the curiosity of the youthful bride; for all women, especially in the East, or where Eastern habits prevail, delight in what partakes of mystery and intrigue.

“Oho! so there’s a secret!” exclaimed the young lady, clapping her hands with joy, and nestling up confidentially beside her companion. “A love affair, of course?”

And she looked inquiringly in Azzahra’s eyes, who only replied by a tell-tale mantling blush.

“Exactly! I thought so,” continued the bride, with girlish volubility. “Some one on board the wreck, no doubt?—most likely a Christian? How delightful this is! What immense fun!”

Azzahra offering no denial, and still blushing deeply, the other continued: "Why should you not love a Christian, dear? It is very wicked, of course, but that makes it all the more delicious. I must tell you a secret, love," she went on, drawing closer to her friend, and reducing her voice to a whisper. "I adore the Christians!—they wear such beautiful boots and gloves and rings, and they look so handsome in their gay uniforms; and they clatter their swords so splendidly on the ground, as they stride along with such a proud martial step; and they turn and look so tenderly after one, as if they really admired and loved one! Ah, dear me! what would I give to have one of these superb beings for my husband! After all, though, I suppose one would feel it very dreadful to be the wife of a heathenish unbeliever?"

"The Christian religion is very beautiful," answered Azzahra; "I assure you they are neither heathens nor unbelievers."

"And pray, how do you know?" asked Zorah, with the air of one who feels that the crucial question she is asking can only be answered by a frank acknowledgment that her implied suspicions are well founded.

"The lady told me who has charge of my instruction," Azzahra replied, evasively ignoring the suspicions of her friend.

"The lady, indeed? What a very likely

story!" shrewdly ejaculated the latter, with a knowing smile of derision. "Oh, you sly fox! trying to deceive with such transparent nonsense. Come, now, confess you had a Christian lover in that ill-starred vessel, and that it was for his sake, and to save his life, that you incurred your father's rage?"

The soft impeachment Azzahra was forced to admit, upon which the precocious bride clapped her hands again and danced for joy.

"What a glorious triumph!" she cried, throwing her arms round her friend, and embracing her with immoderate transports of affection. "How I envy you your happy fate, my dear beloved Azzahra! Instead of leading a life of enforced seclusion—like what, alas! I am destined to pass—you will mix in the great bright world, sharing its pleasures and its joys!"

"And perchance its sorrows?" interrupted Azzahra, heaving a gentle sigh.

"What sorrows can exist in such blissful scenes?" returned the child of inexperience. "Put out of your mind, dear Azzahra, these gloomy forebodings, and banish them as empty noxious dreams."

This colloquy was interrupted by the harsh voice of Selim Mustapha summoning Azzahra to his presence, who with fear and trembling hastened to obey the command.

Since he had dismissed his child to the

Zenana, to be tended by its inmates, he had pondered over the scene among the rocks below. That some secret understanding existed between his child and the Giaour seemed certain. Her daring recklessness in braving the fire of the Beni-Menasser the moment the young man appeared on the vessel's deck and the mad plunge the other took to save her life when struggling in the waves proved incontestably that Al-Mansour, on the former occasion, was correct in his belief.

"Would to Heaven," he ejaculated, "that the accursed dog had turned back to the ship with his burden, as his brainless friends wanted, instead of swimming for the shore! The poor brute showed his superior intelligence by refusing, heavily weighted as he was, to face those resistless billows. Soon would they have swallowed up the infidel, and his accursed presence would have troubled me no more!"

Still it was his belief that the two had never met, never spoken together, never interchanged vows of love. What opportunity could they have found? he argued. Was not the faithful Kredoudja ever by his daughter's side? He therefore resolved to banish his anger, and to receive his daughter with confidence and affection. Was she not about to accompany him, perhaps for months, to the distant Sahara? And even supposing any foolish tenderness for this son of

perdition did by any possibility exist, would it not of a surety wither away long before her return? Greedily would he have stricken the Christian, but to his beloved Azzahra he determined to show mercy and compassion, loving her as he did, and deeming this the surest way to save her from destruction. Wherefore he met her kindly. He inquired the cause of her unaccountable interference, and mentioned his suspicion at the time that she wished to protect some one in particular among the Giaours from the death all the race deserved. This Azzahra strenuously denied, as he expected, and as he affected to believe, asserting that her sole aim was to avert the horrors of bloodshed.

“But you nearly caused the bloodshed of your father and his friends,” retorted he. “But for the rocking of the vessel destroying the steadiness of their aim, those foul sons of carrion, when they fired, would have killed us all. I forgive you, though, my child. You acted the part of a fearless heroine—a true Child of the Desert!”

On the return of Azzahra to the Zenana, greatly relieved in mind by the result of her interview with Selim Mustapha, she was met by Zorah in transports of delight.

“Such glorious news, dear Azzahra!” the child-bride called aloud exultingly. “The Kaïd is to accompany your father to the South with a

chosen band of the tribe, and I am to go too, to be a Child of the Desert like yourself."

"You are to do nothing of the sort!" angrily screamed the eldest wife of the Kaïd from the adjoining apartment, whose charms had long ceased to give pleasure to her husband, but whose offended vanity was soothed by being made ruler over all his house. "If he takes any of his wives it shall be me, not an ignorant young thing like you, who knows not how to make a kabob or a kouskoussou."

Zorah replied not, well knowing that her beauty and powers of attraction would carry the day; while the angry matron strided away, imagining that her triumph was complete, and that she had effectually trampled upon her detested rival.

"What a bitter disappointment!" sighed Azzahra, so soon as she and Zorah were alone, and knew that they could not be again overheard. "Of course she will have her way; the Kaïd will not dare to refuse."

"Of course she will not have her way," answered Zorah with a proud toss of her head. "You just let them fight it out. I am young and fair to look on, and the Kaïd loves me; she is old and ill-favoured, and of her he is weary."

"Sincerely I trust you may be the chosen one," Azzahra said with a doubtful look; "but I fear that virago will supplant you. How can

the Kaïd shake her off, if she persist in her demand?"

"If she worries him more than he chooses to endure he will give her a sound flagellation," Zorah replied. "He is not the man to have his will thwarted, believe me. He has said I shall go, and he must be obeyed. I only wish that domineering old cat may tease him and put him in a passion. I would give anything to see her get a good flogging."

Azzahra pondered deeply over this degraded system of inflicting corporal punishment on women, and her reflections did not diminish her reluctance to wed a Mahometan.

"Your husband has never flogged you, I suppose?" she continued, turning to the young wife.

"Not yet," replied the latter sadly, and with a hot blush that betrayed the shame and degradation she experienced at contemplating such an outrage. "He is fond of me still, and devotes himself to seeking my love in return; but my turn will probably come some day, when his passion for my charms has passed and he prizes me no more."

"But his chastisement would not surely be inflicted from wanton caprice?—not unless you misbehaved yourself?" inquired Azzahra. "In that case, by a moderate amount of discretion, you would retain his affection, and nothing so serious could occur."

“That depends,” answered the poor helpless child, bursting into tears. “These other wives hate me, and may poison his mind with venomous falsehoods, to undermine and blast my happiness. Who knows? Allah alone can tell!”

“Poor thing!” inwardly sighed Azzahra, as she fondly embraced the weeping bride. “To what a base unloving sensual life these accursed Arabs condemn the wives of their bosom!”

She thought of the disgrace and tragic fate of her own beloved mother, and shutting herself up alone she wept bitterly.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TREACHERY.

BUOYED up with exultation at the conquest he no longer doubted he had made of Olinda, after the tender confiding words they had interchanged on board the Atlanta, and incited by his wild passion to devise fresh schemes for compassing her destruction, the Marquis de St. Bertrand sought his friend and confidant Auguste Pécoul, after he had long watched the yacht bravely ploughing her way through the troubled waves.

“*Pauvre diable !* I pity you from my heart,” exclaimed Auguste, as his comrade entered the barrack-room, where he was engaged in his wonted intellectual employments of yawning and smoking, as he reclined with indolent nonchalance in a lounging-chair. “You must be in a rare passion at losing this chance for lovemaking with the fair Olinda !”

“Passion, indeed ? I should think so,” replied St. Bertrand as he angrily paced the room.

“What could have induced the Chief to refuse my leave at the last moment? And here is an ‘official,’ just come when too late, granting me leave of absence for three months.”

“The Chief is a *sacré cochon* !” rejoined his friend, puffing at his meerschaum. “The old fool served me just the same last year. He is always boring one with some perverse meddlesome nonsense.”

“Very true,” St. Bertrand replied; “but in the end he has not behaved to me so badly after all, and I mean to turn my three months to useful account, unless I am grievously mistaken in my powers of success.”

“That is all very well,” Auguste answered. “But on the yacht you would have had the fair Anglaise exclusively to yourself, the entire cruise offering one never-ending golden opportunity. How propitious Fate would have been had such a luscious plum dropped into your mouth !”

“As the plum has not dropped in, I must pluck it and put it into my mouth myself,” continued St. Bertrand. “The time for action is at hand.”

Auguste put down his pipe, and turning round looked his friend in the face.

“That means that I am about to come on the scene ?” he said inquiringly.

“It does,” the other replied. “You promised to succour me, Auguste, and I am going to ask for a fulfilment of your generous engagement.”

“You know I am not the man to turn back from what I have undertaken,” Auguste responded, with a mind conscious of rectitude and integrity. “You know I am a man to keep my word. You know you can reckon upon me in the hour of need. You know I am a man of honour.”

A man of honour, forsooth! Could he be a man of honour who was conspiring against an innocent kind-hearted girl?—who was pledging himself to aid and abet in dragging her down to ruin and infamy?

How easily, alas! do we deceive ourselves! How easily, through habit, association of ideas, and inclination, do we accustom ourselves to look at matters through a distorting lens, putting carefully out of sight every forbidding and unpleasant feature, while we concentrate our whole attention on what is rosy-hued and bright!

The *vie de garçon* which he and his brother hussars were wont to lead, and the consequent numberless *affaires tendres* in which they were from time to time engaged, so familiarised Auguste to look upon such matters as harmless and unavoidable recreations, that he altogether failed to see in its true light the enormity of the crime in the perpetration of which he was ready to assist.

“All is fair in love and war!” he would reason. “Parbleu! what would become of poor

devils stuck down in out-of-the-way corners at the end of the world without an occasional liaison with some fascinating fair one to beguile the weary hours? And as to lovemaking being wrong, I do not believe a word of it. Ladies all delight in being made love to, and surely what the ladies think and do cannot be wrong!"

This logical view of the case thoroughly satisfying his easily convinced mind, and removing any scruples that might once have existed, he adopted a code of expansive moral principles which would vastly startle and shock the propriety of an elderly ladies' tea-table.

Violence, it is true, he had never practised in his many amours, nor even contemplated. But he felt bound, in honour to his friend, to stand by him on every occasion; wherefore he shrank from deserting him now, or even letting him perceive the doubts which he could not help entertaining, though it must be owned they gave but little trouble, and sate upon him very lightly.

"Well do I know your honourable feelings and your fidelity," continued St. Bertrand. "Well do I know you, Auguste, *mon ami*, to be as true and firm as steel."

"What is your plan?" the other asked, rising up and filling out two glasses of absinthe, one for his friend and one for himself. "How about the marriage? Why has that broken through?"

Is it that she does not want you, or that you do not want her?"

"Both," said Raoul in reply. "But wherefore do you conclude that the marriage has broken through?"

"Naturally enough," the other answered, as he sipped his liqueur. "You spoke of the time for action having arrived, and claimed the fulfilment of my promise to join you in your meditated enterprise. This does not sound as though such a humdrum commonplace business as matrimony were in your thoughts."

"Right, *mon camarade*," Raoul exclaimed, laughing heartily at his forgetful oversight, and at Auguste's ready-witted and unanswerable reasoning. "The idea of matrimony has been scouted ignominiously, for she owns not a sou; and my motto is, 'No money, no marriage.'"

"I doubt her having no fortune," said Auguste. "The family all seem rich."

"She told me herself, my dear fellow," Raoul answered, "so there is an end of that fiasco. And, between ourselves, I feel glad the bubble has burst. It is wrong to marry an heiress and squander her money, reducing her, it may be, to penury and starvation, just to gratify one's thirst for extravagance. *Ce n'est pas gentil*, Auguste. I call it base, cowardly, scoundrel-like behaviour, for which a man deserves severe chastisement. Not that I set up to be better than

my neighbours. I would go in for a good deal to-morrow all the same, if I got the chance. What is an unlucky devil to do who knows not which way to turn for getting pulled out of his difficulties? But I should rather not, I can tell you, and am but too pleased this time to be out of temptation."

"In my opinion you are highly fortunate to escape losing your liberty," added Auguste, with the air of a wary bird not easily caught, that long and cautiously surveys the snare before taking the fatal hop. "Matrimony, like death, is destined to come to us all some day or other, I suppose. But, for my part, I am not ambitious, and feel very well contented to remain as I am."

"So do I," chimed in the Marquis, "particularly when one can get such a *ravissante* little *bonne-bouche* as the divine Olinda."

"Now that you have been baulked of your flirtation on the yacht," demanded Auguste, "how do you intend meeting your inamorata? Intercept her somewhere along the coast—eh?"

"At Oran."

"Exactly what I thought. I guessed the Atlanta would put in there. You know this, then, for certain?"

"She told me so herself. Pretty good authority I should think."

"And will she remain at Oran?"

"She intends to stay for at least a fortnight."

"Then for what do you require me?" demanded Auguste. "You find out where she and her friends stop; you put up at the same hotel; you meet her out in the town, of course by accident; you sit next her at *table d'hôte*; you renew your visits, and carry on the same old game of insinuating eloquence. What more do you want? I should only be *de trop*."

"Most judicious and excellent programme," calmly observed Raoul. "But one important feature you overlook. Oran is a large populous town, and what chance could I possibly get there of carrying off my prize?"

"By force, do you mean?" Auguste asked.

"Unquestionably," the Marquis replied, as he rose up and looked out of the window, fiercely knitting his brows and twirling his well-waxed moustaches the while with his jewelled fingers.

Now when a Frenchman twists his moustaches and knits his brows while staring at a woman, or even thinking of one, it is a sure and infallible sign that he meditates mischief. So it was in this case. The Marquis was so deeply wrapped up in the preparation of elaborate devices for grappling with his victim and dragging her into his clutches that for long he even forgot the presence of his companion. The latter had lighted a cigar, the smoking of which gave him such pleasant occupation that he cared

not to interrupt St. Bertrand's meditations. Besides, considerable doubts and difficulties absorbed his own reflections.

At length, offering over his shoulder a cigar from his case to the latter, who was returning past him to the seat he had just left, he said :

"Then what course do you propose, St. Bertrand? To me the case appears hopeless."

"Nothing of the sort," the other answered. "You lack invention and pluck and dash, Auguste. A bold stroke alone is wanted to gain the day. Some stratagem must be devised for decoying these people among the wild lonely hills, far away from the ken of men, unless indeed it be Arabs; and they would not open their lips against us French officers, no matter how great the crime they witnessed. In such a spot we could do with her what we pleased."

"In fact, you have resolved to seize her and possess yourself of her against her will?" observed Auguste.

"Certainly," replied Raoul. "And this part you will have to take in hand."

"With all my heart," Auguste hastened to reply. "Gladly will I serve you, my trusty friend and comrade."

"You see I must not appear," the Marquis proceeded. "However well-disguised, detection would almost surely follow; and should I even escape recognition, my absence would be noticed

by her friends, and suspicion would be directed against me, which might come to the ear of the authorities so as to ruin my professional prospects."

Pécoul argued that he likewise would risk being discovered and having his military career destroyed, but his companion soothingly endeavoured to reassure him. "Fear not, *mon ami*," he said in his blandest accents; "I will so disguise you that you may defy identification by any one. Besides, you forget that to these people you are an utter stranger. Do not suppose for a moment that I would be inconsiderate enough to subject you to danger on my account, no matter how dear to me the object at heart. You know me too well, Auguste, to think me capable of such base selfishness."

Auguste did not quite see this, nor did he approve of being pushed forward to play the principal part in such a questionable undertaking, though quite ready to act as a subordinate.

"Well, let us suppose I have succeeded in taking her off for you—what next?" he asked. "If you are afraid, as you say, to accompany her, what will be the good of it all? Had you not better leave her alone?"

"You surprise me, Auguste, by your slowness of comprehension, about love-matters especially, with which you ought to be *au courant* by this

time," exclaimed St. Bertrand impatiently. "Of course I mean to follow, though not at once. I must stay behind for a time, to go through the farce of virtuous indignation against imaginary Arabs for daring to perpetrate such an outrage, and to display untiring energy in scouring the country to rescue the unhappy victim from their ruffianly grasp."

"Well done!" exclaimed Auguste, as he surveyed his comrade with wondering admiration. "Turning the Arabs to some useful purpose at last!"

"Then, after I have exhibited sufficient sympathetic horror of the foul crime, to establish indisputably my innocence," Raoul continued, "I will fly on the wings of love to the depths of the Sahara, where in a distant oasis you will await my coming with the fair captive, my faithful beloved friend, and I will receive into these arms my long-coveted prize, the glorious Olinda!"

"In all sincerity I wish you success, and will do for you what lies in my power, though I candidly confess the task pleases me not," replied his friend. "But you little know these *Anglaises*, Raoul. You will fail, and fail signally. Never will she submit but by compulsion and violence, and what will be the end of that? You would not kill her, I suppose, and you cannot lock her up for ever. Some opportunity

she will find and seize to fly from your prison, and what will be your fate then, think you? Remember, the day she escapes and regains her freedom you are a lost man ! ”

“Alarm not yourself by such gloomy anticipations,” rejoined Raoul. “Her resistance will be very shortlived. I have two powerful engines of destruction for dragging her into my power—one is love, and the other is flattery. She loves me to distraction already, though she knows it not yet herself, for she believes in that most monstrous of impostures, Platonic affection. And, as for flattery, I can lead her whither I choose as with a silken cord. Exalted she is in intellect and accomplishments above all women I ever met, but in matters of worldly wisdom she has the guileless simplicity of a child, so that all who run can read her inability to withstand the wily arts of a fascinating tempter.”

“Such as you, *mon garçon charmant, avec tous les vices*,” added Auguste, addressing St. Bertrand, who gracefully bowed his acknowledgments for the flattering compliment.

“Now to horse and away for Oran ! ” exclaimed the Marquis as he rose to get ready. “Time is precious.”

This was a surprise to Pécoul, who had not contemplated such an early start, nor so long a journey on horseback. Against the proposal he

warmly expostulated, seeing that they could travel much better and quicker by rail and diligence, without troubling about their horses, there being no provision for conveying them by train. This St. Bertrand acknowledged, but explained that for putting his plans into execution it was essential to have their horses at Oran, and a few days' hard riding should suffice for arriving at their destination. It would certainly be a long journey, and occupy a deal of time, but they would get to Oran soon enough, he said; for expectant longing to behold the beloved one exercises a salutary effect upon woman's mind, making her prize doubly the long-pined-for meeting, when the man and the hour arrive.

Accordingly, dispatching their servants and baggage by diligence and rail, they started on their long riding expedition, making their first halt at the Baths of Hammam R'rira.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BATHS OF HAMMAM R'RIRA.

WHEN Zorah told Azzahra she hoped the Kaïd and his eldest wife would fight out the question as to whether that venerable matron should accompany him to the South in lieu of herself, she little imagined the serious character the quarrel would assume. Of course the husband triumphed, being a Mahometan, as surely as in Europe the wife would have triumphed, being a Christian. "*Autres pays, autres mœurs*," says the proverb. But, not desiring an open rupture, for he loved the old lady still in a brotherly sort of way, who was the mother of his eldest son, and who made herself useful as a housekeeper and as a guardian over the younger and more volatile inmates of his harem, he could only triumph by a compromise—by consenting, in fact, to treat her to what in Cockney parlance is known as "an outing," and to take her along with his other wives to the Baths of Hammam R'rira on his way to the South.

On the road Selim Mustapha and the Kaïd discoursed on the consequences that might follow from their abortive attempt on the wrecked yacht at Chenoua when the Government came to hear of the occurrence.

"Would that your daughter had not interfered, and prevented our killing the accursed Christian dogs!" said the Kaïd to Selim Mustapha. "Were they dead we should have nothing to fear now."

"Quite the contrary," answered Selim Mustapha, who had learned to view the matter in its true light, and to understand how fortunate had been Azzahra's prevention of crime. "Had these men in an evil hour been slain, would not those on board the steamer have known who were guilty of the murders; for did they not see us escaping up the mountains, and would they not have borne evidence against us?"

The Kaïd owned that Selim Mustapha was right in the view he took, and that this case was exceptional. "But as a rule," said he, "I recommend making away with witnesses and proofs and other elements of danger. Then one's mind is at rest, and one can sleep in peace."

"My system likewise," added his companion. "It saves a world of future anxiety."

He then related how he had assassinated the

spy at the *café maure* in the Sahel, a deed that elicited the warm and hearty approval of the great man beside him, who was greatly scandalised, however, at hearing of his friend's weakness of mind in yielding to Azzahra's intercession for the life of the gendarme beneath the Tomb of the Christian.

"That man, I prophesy, will one day meet you again and drag you down," exclaimed the Kaïd; "you did ill to let him live."

"I feel I did act unwisely," the other answered; "but I could not refuse my child's entreaties. However, I share not your apprehensions of future danger arising in his case," he added. "Long ere this the unbelieving hound has gone to the accursed depths of Gehenna!"

"Your child seems doomed ever to cross your path," the Kaïd continued. "Let us hope her meddling may not yet get you into trouble! I fear me we shall come to grief about that wrecking scene," he resumed. "The Bureau Arabe are sure to call us to account."

"That I doubt," rejoined Selim Mustapha; "for luckily no actual crime was committed, and there is not any positive charge to make beyond giving the Christians such a fright that they tried to shoot us down. Depend on it, beside some inquiry and a lot of correspondence, you will hear nothing from the authorities, for

they would not be so unjust as to levy a fine on the district under the circumstances."

This logic failed to convince the Kaïd, who rightly thought their attack was an overt act that would bring down severe punishment, though no blood had been spilt.

"At all events my departure occurs propitiously," the Kaïd continued; "and I left orders to say, in reply to inquiries, that I have been absent some time from home."

"That was well done," said his companion. "But see! there lies Hammam R'rira below," he added, pointing to the ancient ruins.

On a large plateau along the hillside they were descending they could discern the site of the old city beneath them covered with asphodel and *broussaille*, through which rose up here and there blocks of the old walls and buildings, mainly composed of rubble concrete. In the time of the Roman occupation this city was the Bath or Baden of the Numidian and Mauritanian provinces, and was called Aquæ Calidæ, from the hot springs that bubble out of the hill at the top of the town.

The women of the party stopped, on passing this spot, to feel with their hands the heat of the waters, which is so great that food can be cooked in the large reservoir into which they flow; and Azzahra looked with pity at the numerous bodies of unfortunate frogs and in-

sects that had heedlessly jumped into the bubbling pool and been boiled to death, though no Saint Patrick was there to impel them to the rash act of suicidal destruction.

After earthquakes, which are of constant occurrence, these springs emit a strong smell of sulphur, proving their deep-seated origin.

This thermal spring was a source of great wonderment to Azzahra, who vainly tried to comprehend where the fires existed that raised this water to so high a temperature. They must be subterranean, she concluded, seated far, far down in the centre of the earth, though why the water should work its way up from thence to the surface passed her understanding.

That this does happen, however, would seem undoubted, though some savants try to maintain that the phenomenon, at least in the Icelandic Geysers, occurs through streams descending under the surface from hills above the spring into a stratum not far beneath it, in which a chronic state of combustion exists. The heat thus engendered, they hold, expands the constantly increasing volume of fluid, which then makes a way of escape for itself by forming a rarefied column, and so mounting to the outer air. But, although one writer affects to describe his discovering in the island one of these spontaneous-combustion-heated strata, beneath which one in a normal unheated condition was found, this

solution of the problem appears very dubious and unsatisfactory. For how possibly could this stratum be kept constantly heated except from below? Indeed, Lord Dunraven, in his valuable book "The Great Divide," explodes this far-fetched theory as regards the great American Geyser system in the Far West, expressing his firm belief that these jets have their origin near the great eternal furnaces that occupy the centre of our globe.

How these furnaces are fed, and how air finds its way to fan them and keep them from becoming extinguished, is a still more abstruse question, the answer to which has not yet been found, even in these days of restless investigation and perpetual discovery. Probably the fires are kept up by electricity, which will continue to burn in a vacuum.

A short way below the ruins of *Aquæ Calidæ* the travellers were rejoiced to behold the hotel and baths of *Hamam R'rira*, whither they were bound, as they began to become weary and exhausted by the long journey, although the women were mounted on mules, and the two great men on the *Kaïd's* horses, the "suite" bringing up the rear on foot.

Azzahra paused to admire the lofty commanding situation on which the Romans had planted their great health-station, and to survey the far-reaching tract of country that the view em-

braced. To the right, lifting its head above a mass of primeval forest, stood the pointed summit of the Zakkar Chergui, and also the Zakkar R'rarbi, at whose foot lies the mountain fortress of Milianah; to the left the Atlas range, rising tier above tier, stretched far away to Blidah and Medeah; while in front, across a deep gorge, rose a range of steep hills crowned by Vesoul-Benian, one of the few French colonies that are found out of the plains.

On arriving in the large quadrangle, covered overhead with trees and trelliswork, round which run the low buildings of the hotel, Az-zahra and Zorah were amazed to hear loud wailing and screaming in the bath-house close by, as though a number of women were in bodily fear, and were loudly imploring mercy. Seeing their astonishment, and knowing they had never been at Hammam R'rira before, the elder women were highly entertained; for they had on former occasions taken part themselves in the ceremonies that were going on, and they told the two bewildered novices that these sounds proceeded from women praying to Sidi-Sliman, the Prince of the Djins, to bless them with offspring.

"Come over to the baths," exclaimed one of the Kaïd's wives, to her uninitiated companions, "and look at the suppliants performing their devotions. It is a most solemn and im-

pressive scene. Not that you desire yet to pray for children, I suppose," she added, turning to Azzahra with a smile, who deeply blushed in silence.

"No more does this young minx," added the eldest wife, pointing to Zorah, whom she bitterly hated for the influence her charms exercised on their joint lord. "There are plenty of children in the house already, without her setting up her airs and swelling the number."

Zorah felt sorely tempted to indulge in a little quiet nail-scratching and hair-pulling; but remembering, prudently, that her husband's love gave her in reality full command of the situation, she allowed the spite and malevolence of the old lady to pass unheeded.

When they reached the large plunge-bath whence the deafening yells and shrieks issued, they found the large vault, which was nearly dark, filled with unattired Arab females, who frantically vociferated, as they plunged about in the almost boiling water, to attract the notice of the great Evil Spirit.

These heathenish rites are chiefly practised on Mondays and Tuesdays, as the natives believe that on those days the great Prince of the Djins, Sidi-Sliman, is more effectually invoked than during the rest of the week, and also that he answers prayer more readily by night than by day.

With breathless interest Azzahra watched the

performance of these mystic ceremonies, and was astonished at the prayerful earnestness and evident faith of the devotees.

When entering the bath the women rubbed their bodies over with leeks, and then wrapped up incense in small pieces of paper, which they set fire to and threw into the water while burning, uttering all the while loud cries of "lou-lou, lou-lou" to the Djins. Next they set small dolls, emblematical of children, at the margin of the bath, round each of which they placed from thirty to forty small burning candles, and again called upon the Evil Spirit with deafening cries, kept up till late at night, to make him understand that they besought him to bless them with offspring.

How ready the transition to gross sensual idol-worship from religion that thus believes its object of adoration has ears to hear and eyes to see naturally in the flesh (as these Mahometan worshippers of the Djins believe), instead of supernaturally in the spirit! For few idolaters are so senseless as to imagine that the block of wood or stone they ignorantly worship is endowed with godlike powers and attributes. They simply regard the object as an emblem on which to concentrate their attention while praying to the Supreme Being it typifies and represents, whose dwelling-place is far away in the Spirit Land.

Such has ever been the form of worship adopted by the false religions, of all countries and ages, which were founded on ignorance and superstition. At first adoration was never offered to the visible object, the thoughts being drawn up through its instrumentality to the great original Divinity in whose stead it was set up. But such nice distinctions proved too subtle for the weak corrupt mind of man, ever prone to error and false belief. Thus was idolatry introduced, with its attendant follies and vices. The shadow was confounded with the substance. The real and unreal became blended together in hopeless irretrievable confusion. In like manner were these ignorant Moslems, though theoretically rejecting the worship of graven images, bordering on the confines of paganism, by their superstitious outcry to beings purely imaginary, and who, even if clothed in a tangible form, could possess no divine attributes.

As the women were coming out from beholding the prayerful bathers, to return to their apartments in the hotel, St. Bertrand and Pécoul rode into the courtyard. At sight of the cavaliers Zorah was vividly impressed by the gracefulness and easy nonchalance with which they rode, and whispered aside to Azzahra enthusiastic encomiums on the personal appearance of the two dashing French officers.

"What a contrast," exclaimed the silly child, "to our ungainly lords and masters!"

"For shame!" cried Azzahra, checking her. "You must not talk so."

"But you know I am right," the bride went on with enthusiastic warmth. "One glance suffices to prove the immeasurable superiority of these beautiful godlike creatures."

"My dear Zorah," interrupted her friend, "you forget you are a married woman, and that it is very wicked to admire, or even look at, any man except your husband."

"Darling Azzahra!" exclaimed the bride, smiling, as she put her arm round and embraced her companion, "you must shake off these narrow-minded, prejudiced notions. Take the good the gods send you, not prying too closely nor asking unnecessary questions. We women all like to admire and to be admired."

That the child spoke sound philosophy Azzahra could not deny, though deploring that frivolity, folly, and vanity should occupy so large a share of human existence.

As the cavaliers dismounted, they were no less surprised than had been Zorah and Azzahra at hearing the immersed *religieuses* practising their pagan rites, for they too were strangers to the place.

"The gruntings and roarings of the herd of swine when the devils entered in and drove

them down the steep place into the Sea of Tiberias must have sounded like soft whisperings of doves compared to this ungodly uproar!" exclaimed St. Bertrand.

"And the benighted beings fancy this is a religious ceremonial!" Pécoul continued, with a shrug of pitying contempt.

"The strangest part about these pagan mysteries in honour of the Djins," observed St. Bertrand, "is that the devotees who celebrate them are Mahometans, whose religion enjoins the strictest abjuration of all worship of idols or of any inferior deities. It was to suppress the false religious systems and the gross idolatry of the Arabs, borrowed from the Sabaeans—and which chiefly consisted in worshipping the fixed stars and planets, together with the angels and their images, which they honoured as inferior deities, and whose intercession they besought as their mediators with God—that Mahomet introduced his new religion, by which he ordained that all honour and worship must be given to God only. So great had he found the universal growth of idolatry that, besides the household gods kept by all inhabitants which they last took leave of when going abroad and first saluted at their return home, there were no less than three hundred and sixty idols, equaling in number the days of the Arabian year, in and about the Caaba of Mecca, to whom

sacrifice and other offerings were presented as well as to God, who was often put off with the least and worst portion, as their Prophet upbraids them with in the Koran."

"What a mass of knowledge and what a memory you have got, Raoul!" exclaimed his friend. "You are at home on every subject."

"It pays, my dear Auguste," answered his comrade as they entered the hotel. "Knowledge gives power; and, to shine in society, above all among the fair, a man should know and be able to converse about everything. But I feel ravenously hungry after our long ride, so let us to dinner, which will be far more satisfying than abstruse religious dissertations."

Seeing Pécoul appear thoughtful during the evening, Raoul rallied him, and hoped he was not about to become faint-hearted after he had put his hand to the plough.

"Have no fear on that head," Auguste replied. "What causes my depression is that I feel assured we shall have taken this wearisome journey in vain, for that you will assuredly fail I firmly believe. The fair quarry will take fright, when you press her forward towards the toils spread for her capture."

"Trust to my prudence for managing aright," said his friend. "We must act quietly and cautiously, and then look with confidence to the result. Poison must be disguised, for none will

be persuaded to partake thereof unless it be concealed by something that appears harmless. So likewise with danger, it must be hidden from view. Creüsa would have abhorred Medea's present if the pestilent venom had not been kept from sight by the exterior lustre of gold and gems; the garment that destroyed Hercules had the appearance of being beautiful; and Eve had neither eaten of the forbidden fruit, nor given it to Adam, if it had not seemed to be good and pleasant, and if she had not been led to believe that by tasting it they should both become as gods."

In the morning, before setting out again, the two hussars were lounging on the trellis-covered terrace that overlooks the deep valley below the hotel, when the young landlady came laughing, to say that the Kaïd and his friend were gone to the bath, where they would remain some time, and that in the meanwhile the ladies of his harem would be delighted to receive them, unveiled too, if they would hasten across the court.

"Come along, Auguste," exclaimed Raoul, jumping up and following the landlady. "An adventure like this does not occur every day."

The fair ones they found squatted on the floor with carpets spread beneath them, and at the instigation of the Frenchwoman, who regarded the scene with keen relish, each of the officers

sat down beside the lady of his choice—St. Bertrand selecting Azzahra, while Auguste commenced to pay homage to Zorah.

An animated discussion ensued in Arabic between the ladies and the Frenchwoman, during which the former indulged deeply in mantling blushes, gigglings, and endeavours to look modest and bashful, with the exception of Azzahra. She drew herself up with much dignity, and severely rebuked the landlady. The hussars were at a loss to comprehend what all this should mean, when the merry and mischievous Frenchwoman enlightened their ignorance by telling them how she was insisting that the two young ladies should allow their beaux to salute them with a kiss.

“All but Azzahra,” she went on laughing, “are delighted at the idea; and as for her, you are beside her and can manage matters for yourself.”

Thus encouraged, and as it were challenged, St. Bertrand brought his heavy artillery to bear, and left no effort untried to induce the lovely girl beside him to relent and confer on him this very small favour, but to no purpose. She met his entreaties and compliments with cold haughty disdain.

This defeat gave rise to unbounded exultation on the part of his friend, who in the interim had many times pressed his lips to those of the smiling and blushing Zorah.

"Beaten at last, St. Bertrand, at your own game!" he cried. "Never could I have supposed that such a triumphant victory awaited me."

On hearing Pécoul pronounce St. Bertrand's name Azzahra turned deadly pale, and turned a look of terror and shame at Raoul.

"My own brother seeking to become my lover! Horrible—horrible!" she wildly and heedlessly shrieked, as she hid her face in her hands and fell swooning in St. Bertrand's arms.

The scout who had been placed at the door of the bathing establishment to signal the return of Selim Mustapha and the Kaïd now hurriedly ran in to give the alarm, when a terrified cry was raised by the women, "The Arabs are coming!" for they well knew they would have been soundly belaboured if caught in the commission of such an atrocious enormity as receiving, unveiled, visitors of the opposite sex.

St. Bertrand and Pécoul, dreading more severe chastisement from daggers and bludgeons, lost no time in bidding a hasty adieu and beating a safe retreat while they were able, but they both felt profound sorrow at the pitiable state in which they were forced to leave Azzahra.

"What could have come over the girl?" Raoul exclaimed. "The poor thing must have gone mad to go on like that about my being her brother!"

"You made too violent love and turned her

head," replied Auguste, smiling. "By the way, I wonder who she is and where she comes from? Clearly she is not one of the Kaïd's family."

"She tells me she lives in Algiers," St. Bertrand replied.

"Then why not attack her and leave the *belle Anglaise* alone?" Pécoul exclaimed. "Just what you want in Algiers to relieve the monotony of existence. She is every whit as beautiful as Olinda, and would be ten times easier reduced to complacent submission. These harem-reared Oriental-blooded beauties, without exception, possess and display an unconquerable craving for intrigue, and there is always some accommodating Negress to arrange clandestine interviews."

"Thanks, my dear Auguste, for the suggestion," answered Raoul; "but I infinitely prefer having English rather than Arab male relatives to deal with. An Englishman will not fight now. He does not care to tear you in pieces and shed your lifeblood on these occasions. He simply warns you with politeness off the premises, whereas the bloodthirsty natives introduce you without compunction to pistols and daggers."

Shortly after the two hussars left the apartments of the Kaïd, Azzahra recovered, and was ready to receive her father with composure on his entry, though she knew that the son of the

man who had so deeply wronged him had but that moment left her presence. The proofs she carried in her bosom in the pocketbook of the murdered spy, but no human eye save hers should ever light on this silent mysterious evidence from the grave. To her relief, she remembered that the unguarded words she had let drop about Raoul being her brother were spoken in French, and that therefore none of her companions were aware, except Zorah (on whose secrecy she could depend) of the terrible truth that had fallen from her lips, and that had produced her uncontrollable emotion.

All the other women looked agitated and somewhat guilty when the men came back, so as to attract the notice of the latter ; but, having no grounds for suspicion, they paid little attention to the circumstance. When the women were by themselves again the Kaïd's eldest wife savagely attacked Zorah for encouraging the familiarities of the gallant dragoon, and threatened to complain of her to the Kaïd for her shameless levity.

"Impudent worthless young thing!" screamed the venerable scold. "I will teach you to cut me out with your false wiles and make me a laughingstock to all the house! Our poor deluded husband shall know what a viper he takes to make the favourite wife of his bosom! I will tell him all."

"You had better not," haughtily answered the youthful beauty, "or he will give you an unmerciful beating for keeping such a bad watch over me and allowing me to be led into temptation. You very well know I did all in my power to keep away that horrid man, and it was only at the urgent entreaties of you all, made with the sole object of drawing me into trouble and disgrace, and also to get rid of his importunity, which you wantonly encouraged, that I at last, with marked reluctance, permitted the freedom which you now turn round and cast in my teeth. Vile, deceitful, jealous, hateful lot!—I abhor you all! It is scandalous behaviour, for which you shall smart well!"

And the proud imperious favourite stamped her little delicate foot on the ground in passionate determination, confident of her power to mould her spell-bound husband according to her will.

The remaining wives knew well what good grounds existed for this self-reliant spirit, and they knew her account would be believed rather than theirs. Prudently submitting to the will of fate, therefore, they made up their minds to bear their mortifying humiliation as best they could.

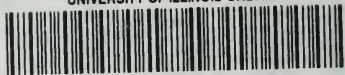
Raoul and Auguste hastened to continue their route westwards towards Oran; while the Kaïd

of the Beni-Menasser and Selim Mustapha, accompanied by Azzahra, Zorah, and Kredoudja, pressed down southwards, to plunge into the depths of the Desert with its wild scenes and adventures.

END OF VOL. II.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 056519066

